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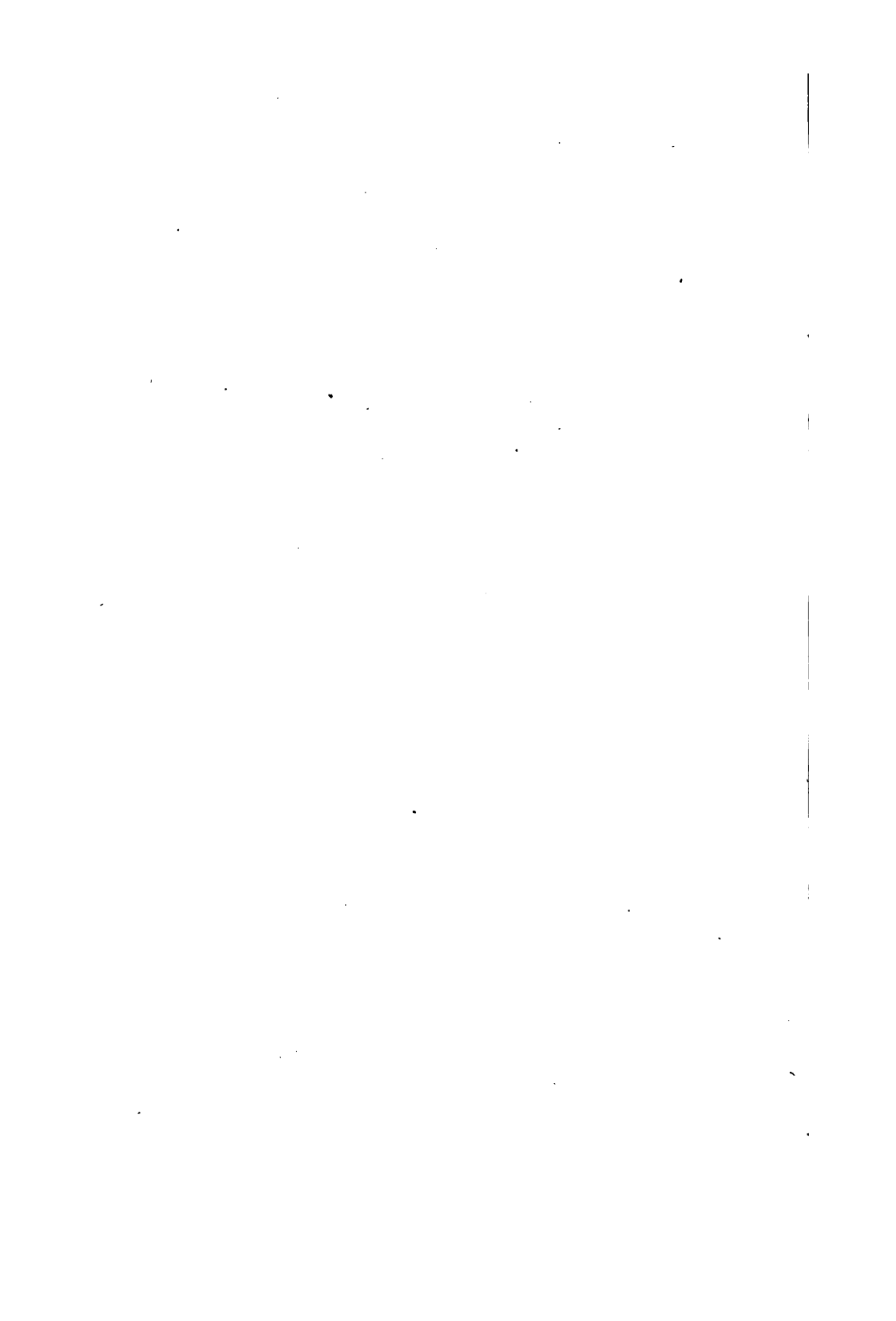




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THE VICISSITUDES

OF

COMMERCE

A TALE OF THE COTTON TRADE.

110

"The cotton plant, whom satire cannot blast,
Shall bloom the favourite of these realms, and last;
Like yours, ye fair, her fame from censure grows,
Prevails in charms, and glares above her foes."

DR. DELANY, A.D. 1721.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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THE
VICISSITUDES OF COMMERCE.

CHAPTER I.

"What though his birth were base, yet comets rise
From earthly vapours, ere they shine in skies.
Prodigious actions may as well be done
By weaver's issue, as by prince's son."

DRYDEN.

THE cold ungenerous climate of the north seems more fitted than the oppressive heats of a tropical one, to develop mechanical ingenuity; and whilst the former urges the inhabitants to a life of mental as well as corporeal activity, we find the latter, by its depressing influence, inclines the labourer to discontinue his exertions the moment he has acquired the means of gratifying his appetites.

It is a remarkable fact in the history of the human race, that no improvement of note was effected during some thousands of years, in the mode of producing that indispensable requisite of civilized life—clothing. The loom of the Egyptian, in the time of the Pharaohs, differed little from that now used by the inhabitants of Persia and India. The preparation of yarn, and the weaving of the web, were processes so lengthy, that it was necessary—as the manufacture of cloth was chiefly domestic—that the lives of almost the whole female population—not excepting royal or noble dames—should be spent at the loom, or with the distaff, in order to supply the wants of the family. It is also remarkable that the nations looked upon by their Roman conquerors as barbarians, and who were least famous amongst the earlier races of men for their display of inventive genius, should ultimately take the lead in industrial pursuits, and, breaking through customs almost

rendered sacred by their antiquity, learn to effect, with the greatest ease, by the union of science and invention, what it would have been thought madness to attempt a century before.

The stream of invention, which was at the commencement of its course placid and gentle, having, year by year, acquired new strength, is now rolling along a mighty torrent, sweeping away through its headlong speed every vestige of the good old times. And whilst some men are looking upon it with admiration and triumph; others, struck with awe, ask—“When is it to cease? and what is to be the end?” It is our intention to follow from its source one of the streams that fed this torrent. Then, indeed, we shall exclaim with the now timorous gazers, “Where are the boundaries that can restrain this flood, which is ever and anon becoming more irresistible and turbid?”

The cottages scattered over the hill-sides of the moory districts of Lancashire

are generally built of small flat stones, with a porch of the same material over the door. Most of them have only two rooms on the ground floor, one occupied by the loom, if any of the inmates are weavers, in the other the family live. In one of these cottages resided William Morland. His employment was weaving, and, being steady and industrious, his earnings were sufficient to satisfy his few wants. He was a tall, large-boned man, about thirty years of age. His wife was a few years younger than himself, rather below the middle height, and of a delicate complexion; they had two children—a boy and girl—the former five years old, the latter three.

The evening of the 4th of August, 1767, on which our story commences, was one of unclouded beauty. The cottage door was open to admit a gentle breeze, so light, indeed, as scarcely to agitate the heath on the hill side. Betty Morland, having placed her spinning-wheel in the

porch, was seated upon a low stool, and busily employed at her work, which she accompanied with a pleasing though untutored voice. So thoroughly had her attention been engaged, that she allowed to pass unnoticed the unusually prolonged absence of her husband. He had left early in the morning to go his accustomed round for the purpose of collecting weft from the wives and daughters of the cottagers in the neighbourhood, and had not yet returned. But when the shades of evening put an end to her labours, she sat listening to catch the sound of his approaching footsteps. He entered the porch, however, before she perceived him, having come over the moor. After divesting himself of his wallet, which appeared better filled than usual, he took up his little boy, and kissing him, said,

“Thou’l be a gentleman yet, Harry.”

“An’ what’s that, daddy?” said the little fellow.

Morland smiled. “It’s a long story I

ha' to tell thee, Betty; but tha mun not let a cheep on it ate to nobody. Tha'll not need turn that wheel o' thine again; no, not as long as't lives."

Betty thought he was not in his proper senses; however, without saying a word, she drew the table near the fire, put a loaf of coarse brown bread, together with a bowl of milk, upon it, threw a piece of bog-timber on the turf fire, and sat down near him with an air of a woman whose curiosity having been raised, is determined to have it gratified.

The substance of Morland's story was this:—after calling at a number of cottages on the lane side, and receiving what little weft the housewives had spun, he was returning home when he thought Jenny Hargreaves would probably have some by her. The distance was four miles across the moor; but Will thought little about that, for he was anxious to have his piece of cloth woven by the end of the following week.

Hargreaves lived in a larger and more

commodious house than Morland's, and attached to it were a few acres of reclaimed land, and a small garden, in which the cottagers' favourite plants—the pink and southernwood—were the principal occupants of the beds.

Morland found Hargreaves and his wife at home; and after chatting some time he showed them his almost empty wallet, asking Jenny if she could fill it for him. On hearing this Hargreaves' countenance fell; and jumping up he took hold of Will's arm, exclaiming, in accents that told the bitterness of his feelings, "has hoo toud thee then? I thout hood blab it ate;" and after some angry comments on female incapacity for keeping secrets, went out of the house. Morland followed him to learn the reason of this strange conduct; Hargreaves beckoned him to the cow-house, and going into one of the stalls removed some loose rushes from a wooden frame, saying, as he did so, "Theyer, that's what thu coom fort' see."

He was intending to say something

more, when Will interrupted him; protesting that he had never heard of the frame from any one; nor could he imagine what it was intended for. Hargreaves knew, by his honest frank manner, that he was telling the truth, and looking him full in the face, said, "Conta houd a sacrit." This intense excitement, which had made him as pale as death, coupled with the strange language he had used, so thoroughly roused his friend's curiosity that he promised whatever his companion chose to relate should be kept silent. They sat down on the rushes, and Hargreaves commenced his story by reminding Morland, that four years previously weaving had been very brisk. The cloth came in sadly too slow for the merchant; and the manufacturers were constantly urging the weavers to do more work. But this was impossible, as their looms were continually stopping for weft, though the spinsters worked from morning till night: and the busy hum of the spinster's wheel could be heard in every cottage.

He would sit for hours, he said, watching his wife Jenny at her spinning-wheel, until one day a thought struck him, he asked himself, "Could not a plan be devised for spinning four or eight threads at the same time?" Such an idea having once entered a mind like Hargreaves' was not to be banished from it because there was no precedent to work upon. Every spare moment was now spent in scheming: numberless experiments were made which all ended in vexatious disappointments. His family were reduced to poverty through his weaving being neglected; Jenny continually complained of his folly, and he was upon the point of giving up his project in despair, when one of his experiments succeeded; and he had just completed the machine which, in a moment of passion, had been shown to Morland; and without whose secrecy it was not likely to prove very useful to either of them.

It has been asserted that the cotton trade of this country, so far from having in the whole of its history an incident approaching to the romantic, is the very opposite of everything pleasing; and that the words themselves suggest to the mind nothing but what is vulgar and commonplace. This assertion has been so constantly made that almost every one is inclined to admit it as an axiom. Let us, however, examine the picture now before us, and we shall discover that they who have thus judged, have judged hastily.

In a small shed on one of the wild moors of Lancashire, are two men; one of them can with difficulty write his own name, and the other is entirely illiterate. They have before them a frame of such rude construction, that any carpenter of ordinary ability would have been ashamed to own the workmanship: yet these men, and this frame, were destined, under the guidance, we firmly believe, of divine Pro-

vidence, to introduce an entirely new system of labour into the world: and along with it was to come a fresh style of thinking and reasoning; which in little more than half a century changed the commercial policy of an empire, more powerful than that of Rome, and converted villages containing hundreds into towns with their tens of thousands of inhabitants: and all this mighty revolution in the industry of the world, originated with men who were alike ignorant of the enormous value and vast capabilities of their own inventions. The almost inconceivable amount of wealth that flowed into the coffers of those who followed the road laid open to them by Hargreaves and others, and the treatment he received from his country are matters of history, though more improbable than the fictions of the novelist.

When Morland had been fully "incensed," as he called it, that, with the assistance of the machine a single person

could produce more weft for the weaver than eight or ten spinsters, he was lost in astonishment.

"An' what art goin't' kessen it," asked Morland, "for tha mun caw it summat?"

"Why tha sees it wur doin th' wark as th' oud woman us't, so we just cawed it artur hur, loyke."

"And whot's that, mon?"

"Why, 'Jenny,' to be sure."

Before parting, they agreed that Morland should return on the following day, and bring Betty with him; when they might consult upon the best course to be adopted. By the time Morland had concluded his narrative, the children were asleep, for the story had been a long one, related in his uncouth dialect; which, for the better enlightenment of Betty, had to be assisted by various plans, drawn with the poker in the soot that crusted the stones of the chimney.

Betty rose in the morning an altered woman. Until now she had been per-

fectly contented with her humble condition, neither wishing to be rich, nor envying those who were so: her highest ambition having been, only to please her husband by her industry at the spinning wheel. She revolved in her mind the great scarcity of yarn, and the willingness with which it would be purchased by the weavers; and by degrees wrought up her imagination to a state of excitement similar to that shown by some of her fair countrywomen to obtain script in the South Sea scheme, or in the more recent railway bubbles.

Jenny was of a different temperament: she would have much preferred remaining in the station of life she then held, than through never so little enterprise raise herself higher in the world. Frequently had she vented her discontent with her husband's experiments, calling him a "lubberly foo," for wasting his time with nothing but scheming, instead of weaving as he used to do. She had threatened

more than once to burn his frame, and then he would not have heart to begin again. Little did Jenny conceive, that the despised frame was to immortalize her, and hand down her name to posterity. When the machine was completed, and had relieved her of a great amount of labour, though fully appreciating its present utility, the only remark she made that testified her approbation was, "Jim has moor brains tel ha thout on." Her advice was, that they should keep their own loom going, and not let any one into the secret. Hargreaves was of the same opinion. But this view of the case did not accord with either Morland's or his wife's notions,—their proposal being, that another frame should be constructed, and as much yarn as possible spun. But then, the difficult point was, how were they to secure the invention to themselves? They had not money to patent it, and were afraid to communicate it to any of their richer neighbours. They finally

arranged, much against the wish of Jenny, that Hargreaves was to work his frame, whilst Morland disposed of the produce as quietly as possible; and, in the meantime, construct another frame, at his own house.

CHAPTER II.

“Th’ invention all admir’d; and each how he
To be th’ inventor miss’d, so easy it seem’d
Once found; which, yet unfound, most would
have thought
Impossible.”

MILTON.

THE town of Blackburn, in the year 1768, was small, but situated in the centre of a populous district, inhabited by a class of cottagers who earned a livelihood partly by farming small patches of land, and partly by spinning and weaving. This had induced a number of manufacturers to put out work there; consequently, upon the market-day a great concourse of weavers from the surrounding country assembled in the town; and, after business was over, small clusters of them might be seen at the corners of the streets, discussing the latest news. The topic of con-

versation being, the great difficulty they had to keep their looms at work, and the extraordinary demand there was for cloth.

About twelve months after the events related in the first chapter had occurred, a small group of men were going on foot towards Blackburn. It was evident to the initiated eye that they were weavers, as each of them carried, slung across his left shoulder, a wallet made of coarse blue linen cloth, and which contained his "cut," or piece of cloth. They overtook on the road two females, who were conveying a large basket of weft to market. As this was a circumstance very unusual in those brisk times, it naturally led to inquiries.

The female who acted as speaker upon the occasion was a good specimen of the lower class of Lancashire women of that day. She was tall and stoutly built, with high cheek-bones, and blessed with an extremely loud voice. She said things

were "comin' to a bonny pass," when a poor lone woman like herself was driven to hawk "th' bit ot wark obate." It never had been so before since she "knowed ou't, an' that wur gooin a fifty yer;" and all because "a lazy oud lubber as wer too lither t'wark," had made a machine that had stopped all the spinsters' wheels in the neighbourhood. "He soud it for next nout, he dud hactully. Ha mon, an he's makin' o' mash o' money!"

Her discourse was freely interspersed with oaths, to which the men joined their own imprecations; launching out into rather strong language against those who would throw the whole country side out of work, if it would advance their own individual interest.

When the party arrived in town, they dispersed over the market, and excited the people, by relating the woman's story. It was deemed expedient to have a meeting, and consider what course would be the best for them to adopt.

Some proposed to apply to the authorities to stop the machine; others, that the man should be kidnapped, and sent out of the country. Both these plans were unsatisfactory to the large concourse of people that now flocked together, and who merely wanted addressing, with a few words of encouragement, to make them riotous. Nor had they to wait long, or to look for some one to lead them on; a man named Hayes, who styled himself a patriot, commenced speaking.

He said, if this sort of thing were allowed to continue, not only their wives and daughters, but themselves would be at the far end for something to do; that a man could weave twice as much cloth if his loom were kept going; therefore, the trade must very soon be overdone. One part of the people would be left without employment, whilst the others would be doing all the work for less money. If they did not take care, and keep a sharp look out, there would be nothing but

starvation and ruin for all. He concluded this harangue by saying, that, "as the people were the best judges of circumstances that affected their own interest so much, they could not confer a more lasting benefit on themselves, than by proceeding in a body to the man's house and breaking his machine."

This was just what the rabble wanted; for nothing pleases a crowd more than to receive such flattery as this; and, when thus encouraged, and led on by some noisy rascal to destroy the property of their industrious neighbours, they are often too willing to follow. So, without any more deliberation, they demanded to be led off to the place. The woman who had given the information acted as guide; she had been one of the most turbulent among the crowd, and undertook the service with a smile of malicious triumph.

The twelve months during which Hargreaves had been assisted by Morland had been spent in more fully developing

and improving the invention. They were doing well together, and had materially bettered their circumstances. Jenny was now quite convinced, that if things were allowed, as she said, "to goo ther own gate," they would turn out all the better for it in the end. But prosperity had a contrary effect upon Betty. Her motto was, "When yo'n cotched one la'rock, it's yessay t'cotch another too't."

The influence which the opposite dispositions of the two women exercised, in retarding or advancing the future wretchedness or prosperity of their husbands and families, was very remarkable. The one communicating her easy habits to Hargreaves; whilst the other, working upon the vanity of Morland, who had got the idea into his head that his son was one day to be a gentleman, stimulated him to still greater exertions.

About noon on the day just alluded to, Jenny was seated in the couch-chair, with one of the children on her knee; two or

three of the others were busy carding cotton, whilst the eldest girl was preparing some rashers of bacon for dinner. Each one appeared completely happy and contented amidst the confusion and dirt. Poor Jenny! she little imagined what hardships she had to encounter, nor knew the bitterness of the cup that was in store for her. The thunder-cloud had been fast approaching, and was soon to burst upon them with such violence, that the shock would be felt by their descendants through many succeeding generations.

Weasel, a little rough-haired dog, very similar to the animal from which its name was borrowed, had been sleeping on some loose cotton, started up, and running to the door, commenced barking most furiously: one of the children, at the same time came in crying, "oh mammy, th' lone's full o'folk."

Hargreaves, who was hard at work, had been alarmed by the cry of the child, and was going into the cottage to ascertain

the cause, when he discovered that a great number of people had surrounded the house. His first impulse was to resist; but Morland, who happened to be there at the time, got him into the house and fastened the door. The rabble raised a shout, and rushing forward, burst into the place. They soon overpowered the inmates; threatening, amidst shouts and execrations, that if the frame was not shown to them immediately "they'd pur um awe t'death." Hargreaves perceiving that opposition could only lead to bloodshed, and knowing that any attempt to dissuade them from their riotous career would be quite useless, was compelled, most reluctantly, to yield to their demand. Whilst this parley was going forward, three or four of the patriots who had contrived to slip into the cow-house during the confusion of the first attack, unobserved by their companions, were, like vultures, devouring the poor man's single ewe lamb that he had guarded with

so much care. These men learned from the woman in what place the frame was; and Hayes, by a preconcerted arrangement, undertook to keep his dupes back so long as to give them a sufficient time to commit one of the most shameful acts of robbery ever recorded in a civilized country. For when the banditti assault in the highway, or the common thief in the town, protection is granted, and the strong arm of the law held out. But what did the authorities in this case? They not only allowed a few of the lowest reprobates amongst the people, the very scum of the rabble, to steal from a poor industrious man and appropriate to their own use, that which might not inaptly be termed the true philosopher's stone—for through its means more wealth has been created than all the gold dug from the mines of Peru—but also allowed the miscreants to remain unpunished.

Hargreaves was dragged out of the house, and a sledge hammer being put

into his hand, they had the brutality to insist upon his striking the first blow. He felt that he could as easily knock down his own child; and dashing the hammer to the floor, resolutely refused. Hayes, more to gratify his own passion than through any sensibility of the bitterness of Hargreaves's feelings, lifted up the hammer, and letting it fall on the principal part of the machine, dashed it to atoms. The dry rushes and heather, lying about the room, were then thrown upon the wreck, and a fire being kindled, the framework, and other portions of the machine which were constructed out of wood, soon disappeared in the flames, amid the shouts and frantic gestures of the mob. Poor Jenny fled up stairs with the children, upon the first alarm being given; but imagining, from the quantity of smoke, that the house had been fired, she opened the window shrieking for help from the people below, who only replied with ribaldry and shouts of laughter.

Hayes, after giving the rioters their cue, left them; and taking Morland on one side, intimated to him that the circumstance of his having one of the frames at his own house was unknown to any one except himself, and that if he (Morland) saved it, the future advantage derived from it must be mutual: if these terms were not accepted he should give the word to the mob, and then nothing he could do afterwards would preserve it from destruction. Morland, thinking more about his wife and children than the benefit that was to accrue to himself, consented to meet Hayes on the following evening, and make an arrangement for the future.

The ringleaders having accomplished their wishes, endeavoured to draw off their dupes; but when once the flood-gates of riot have been unlocked, it is beyond the power of those who opened them to stem the torrent until the waters have spent their strength. Some one

among the mob shouted "let's brun th' goods;" this was received with applause by the rest, nor were they slow in carrying it into effect. The whole of the furniture and everything else that was combustible and ready at hand, being thrown into the flames. Hargreaves was compelled to be a spectator of this infamous proceeding, and witness the destruction of his property, without having the power to preserve any part of it, except Jenny's old spinning wheel.

Their exploits terminated; one of the demagogues mounted the porch over the door, and delivered an harangue from it. He accused Hargreaves of having attempted to enrich himself by depriving their wives and daughters of the means of support; and then went on to say, that the mob should continue to exercise their authority, for they had taken the law into their own hands; and if there were occasion to visit him again, they would have it out of his "bones the next time." A

procession was then formed, and the rabble marched back to the town, parading the streets to show themselves before dispersing.

Hargreaves's first care was to ascertain that his wife and children were safe; and having in some degree allayed their fright by an assurance that they should immediately leave that part of the country, he went round to take a survey of the desolate scene; and thrusting his hands to the bottom of his breeches pockets, the action appearing to give him an additional amount of firmness, poured forth his long pent up rage in unavailing invectives against Hayes.

Morland took the unfortunate family to his own cottage: where their arrival relieved Betty from an agony of suspense; a gossip having very kindly informed her that—"th' mob had bin an' kilt Jim o' Jacks, and brunt aw his things"—she even knew how the deed had been done, but could not tell what had become of any of

the others, but supposed they had "aw gotten brunt: an' sarve um reet too." But the appearance of Hargreaves and his company soon put this comforter to flight. Betty now busied herself in making preparations to lodge her guests for the night. Jenny was anxious to cause as little trouble as possible; "dono fash yoursell" said she, "we mun just sleep up-ot cheers." After a little planning, however, accommodation was provided for the whole of the unfortunate family; a task by no means an easy one in a cottage so small.

They conversed till near midnight on their gloomy prospects. Hargreaves proposed to take the remaining machine into some part of the country where they might continue to work it unmolested. Morland, thinking it better not to acquaint his friend with what had passed between Hayes and himself, excused his wishing to remain, declaring his willingness to risk it again; and offering at the same time to give Hargreaves his share of the money

they had gained whilst being together, as payment for the machine if he would leave it with him. This seemed to be a fair offer, and one not to be refused by a man circumstanced as Hargreaves then was. For he had now made up his mind to throw the whole affair open, and rely upon the generosity of his country to aid him. His recent misfortunes might have taught him what to expect from a nation's bounty.

On the following morning, as Hargreaves still persisted in his purpose to leave that part of the country, a cart was borrowed from a neighbouring farmer, in which the poor outcast were to be conveyed to Bolton, thinking it might be dangerous to pass through Blackburn. Before setting out, Hargreaves took a last look at the jenny-frame he had just sold; nor did he attempt to hide a tear, which trickled down his careworn cheek, at the thoughts of his fond but blighted hopes. Morland endeavoured to comfort him with

bright prospects of future happiness; visions that were always to be in view, but never, alas, destined to be realized. Morland parted from them at Bolton, with many an assurance of friendship; and taking Jenny on one side, told her, that neither she, nor any of her children, should ever want a home so long as he had one to offer them.

Morland had not long returned when Hayes came to the cottage. He was a man who had seen a great deal of the world, having received a good education: but idle habits, and their natural concomitants, bad company, ruined him; and as patriotism is one of the few resources left for such characters, he became a demagogue in a small way. There was very little said by either of the men: Morland was mortified at being dependent upon such a despicable fellow as Hayes; whilst he, conscious of his power, exacted his own terms, and that too, in a manner that showed he was not in a mood to be con-

tradicted. All the yarn spun was to be sent to him, and after fixing his own price upon it, he would allow Morland one-third of the profit. This was an unfair advantage; but as submission, for a time at least, might lead to something better, Morland yielded; and the jenny was once more set to work. Within a few weeks after the riot, three or four frames were constructed by the leaders of the rabble. But they were inferior to Morland's; his machine having received the improvements, which both Hargreaves and himself had been constantly studying to effect. This gave him an advantage over his competitors, of which he took care to avail himself. Hayes had now the means of regaining the respectable position he had once occupied: but instead of making this his aim, the increase of money only gave him the power of still further indulging his depraved appetites.

Jenny-frames soon began to be publicly worked. This emboldened Morland to

seize upon the first opportunity that offered itself to leave his partner: who, as he was getting money without working for it, very naturally opposed any separation; and threats were resorted to by him to prevent it. Thus a few years were passed, when one day upon entering the cottage, Hayes found only the jenny, the family having taken the opportunity during one of his drunken fits, in which he often remained a week or ten days at once, to remove their furniture into another house. The frame Morland next made was larger than any yet constructed, it contained fifty spindles: or, in other words, would spin more yarn than fifty spinsters. The family now began to rise from their low estate, and a dawning of better days appeared—to Betty it seemed almost like a realization of her fondest hopes—hopes, which for some time she had not ventured to express. Little Harry and his sister were placed under the care of the old beadle of the church,

who gave them what instruction he could, spending two or three evenings in each week with them: nor was Morland himself ashamed to join them at their lessons.

Hayes, when left to himself, was carried away by the wildest ambition. He had jennies constructed with more spindles than Morland's, boasting that he would drive all the rest out of the market. At first his profits were large, but his private expenses exceeded them; and no long time had elapsed before all he had was seized, and his person imprisoned for debt. After being liberated from his incarceration, the mean wretches he had so foolishly lavished his money upon shunned his society. This inflamed a temper already soured by confinement, calling into action passions which had been lying dormant during the late season of his prosperity. He vowed vengeance; but, unfortunately, his revenge fell upon the innocent as well as the offending.

He commenced his agitation with great

secrecy, and carried it on with the utmost caution; not judging it prudent to speak openly, before ascertaining from those whom he thought likely to be dissatisfied with the progress machinery was making, how any attempt to arrest that progress would be received by the bulk of the people. He found a few unscrupulous men, choice spirits, ready and willing to execute any design, however villanous. These he employed as emissaries, to instil into minds already prejudiced, a hatred of the new class that was rapidly acquiring wealth, at the expense, and to the injury of the labouring many. These arguments, supported by false statements, were considered by most to be unanswerable. Meetings were held, not only in the town, but every village had its secret committee. Of all these Hayes was the director. He planned a rising throughout the whole district; and, as it was necessary that this rising should be simultaneous, the country was divided into

sections, each of which was to select a separate body of volunteers, who were to visit all the houses in their own section; and, if resistance were offered by any, they were not, in such cases, to content themselves with merely breaking the machines, but burn the house down, or maltreat the owner, and so deter others from adopting a similar course. Some who joined the movement, really believed they were benefiting themselves and the community by aiding it; but, with the greater number, malice was their strongest actuating motive.

It was the intention of Hayes to lead one of the bodies himself. He chose that district in which Morland lived; "Wishing," as he said, "to remain on intimate terms with his friend." But Morland had received, from one of his assistants, an intimation of the proposed visit; he therefore lost no time in taking his machines to pieces, for he had by this time several at work, and sent them, after

dark, along with his wife and children, to a neighbouring town,—not Blackburn, but one more distant. On the day following, he had six men assisting him to get the furniture off, which they hoped to accomplish before the mob arrived. A barrel of Betty's home brewed was broached, and their potations had been sufficient to raise their courage, without incapacitating them for useful exertion. A wish was expressed that, "th' mob ud cum, an' then they met show um ate feyte." The wish was no sooner expressed than granted.

Morland's house stood about a hundred yards from the road; it was approached by a lane, having a low wall on each side, which was continued round to the back, forming a sort of breastwork, but not of sufficient height to afford much protection from stones. The enemy having been perceived when a long distance off, the little garrison held a council of war. The point to be determined upon was,

whether it would be better to defend the house, or, leaving it to its fate, retreat with what they could put upon the cart. The latter course was adopted; and, as they had made up their minds to fight their way, one of the party, by a circuitous route, joined the mob; and, in order to divide their attention, spread the report that some of the things had been carried away, and were just over the hill top. The stratagem succeeded; one band diverged from the road, so as to come behind the house, the other advanced along the highway.

The whole number was about four hundred, of which one-half were boys, eighteen or nineteen years of age. Their dress and language proved at once that, instead of being the industrious men they represented themselves to be, whose wives and daughters had been thrown out of work by the jennies, they consisted of the veriest vagabonds of the country; and as for the females, unworthy of the name, we

must judge them, by the company in which they were found. The defenders, now reduced to six in number, armed themselves with stout oak sticks, about two feet long: one led the horse, whilst the others walked a few yards in the rear of the cart. The rabble overtook them a short distance from the house, on the main road, and opened the affray with a smart shower of stones, of which, unluckily, there was a plentiful supply at hand. This soon roused the blood of the retreating party, who faced about; and, upon their making a charge, the mob instinctively gave way a little. This skirmish had continued about half-an-hour, when some of the attacking party crept behind the stone walls which ran along each side of the road, and, under cover of them, were enabled to get within half-a-dozen yards of the defenders of the cart, without being in danger themselves; and, in this dastardly way, obtained a great advantage. A stone struck Mor-

land on the face. When he fell, a shout was raised by the rabble, like the howling of as many bloodhounds; and, making a simultaneous rush, they laid hold of him, before his companions could lift him up. The oaken sticks now became useful in the hand to hand *mêlée* that ensued, and many a poor fellow felt the weight of them. Morland was twice lost, and as often retaken by his friends; but their courage was beginning to flag, overpowered by numbers, when some one from the crowd, in the very moment of victory, cried out, "Th' sodiers is cummin!" Any one, at all acquainted with the spirit that animates a mob, is aware that, so long as danger is out of sight, not more valiant braggarts ever lived; but, let a few red coats appear on the scene, and instantly each individual breast entertains the same thought,—the same inward voice speaks to each,—“Look to yourselves, and mind you are not the hindmost.” Every face was turned to-

wards the point from which it was supposed the military would advance; and, sure enough, at a bend of the road, about a mile distant, red and blue, with something glittering in the sun's rays, looking very much like bayonets, were distinctly seen, approaching at a quick pace. A panic seized upon the rabble; and, as each conceived the prize he ran for was his own life, the weakest got trodden down by the others in their haste to be off. This was too good an opportunity to be lost; the little band turned round upon their cowardly assailants, and took full revenge; and, in a very few minutes, numbers lay sprawling in the mud, besides those who had been trampled down by their fellows. Hayes was one of the unfortunates; and after being, as one of the men expressed it, "reet weel purd," they rolled him in the dirt, and then left him.

CHAPTER III.

"By mutual confidence and mutual aid,
Great deeds are done, and great discoveries made ;
The wise new prudence from the wise acquire,
And one brave hero fans another's fire."

HOMER'S ILLIAD.

MORLAND was taken up almost lifeless; the bruises he received after his fall were much more dangerous than the cut in his face. The cart had likewise been much injured, one of the shafts was broken during the efforts of a portion of the mob to overthrow it. After repairing damages they retreated towards their deliverers, who were now hidden from view. Their surprise and astonishment may be imagined when, upon arriving at the brow of the hill, they discovered, instead of a company of soldiers, a few peasant women carrying butter to market; they had on

bright red, or dark blue cloaks, with hoods of the same colours: a few men with farming implements over their shoulders accompanied them. The females, afraid to proceed, returned with the cart.

In the meantime, during the affray, the other detachment of the mob, after scouring the country behind the house without finding any of the jennies concealed in the heather, as they had been led to expect, went to the assistance of their companions, and succeeded in rallying part of the fugitives; but some never ceased running until they reached home, almost killed with fright. Scouts were sent out to give timely notice of the approach of the soldiers, the main body sitting down to rest themselves preparatory to another race. But upon learning the true cause of the alarm, their rage knew no bounds. Turf and other combustibles were piled in the centre of one of the rooms of Morland's house, and being fired, it was very soon wrapped in flames.

The band, now that the red coats had been transformed into red cloaks, became as valiant as before. Proceeding from one house to another, breaking the jennies, and ill using the owners.

This was the second machine riot that had occurred within ten years; but was, in its ulterior consequences, much the more important. The former being confined to one individual, and ending in driving from the neighbourhood his family only. Both of them, however, may be said to have accelerated rather than retarded the progress of machinery. For, as the winged seeds of some solitary plant float away on the gentle gales, and appear to the uninformed observer to be lost for ever; but when the succeeding autumn arrives, instead of the single plant rearing its head alone, the verdant mead is white with the ripe tufts, destined in their turn to be borne by the same agency, to the margins of streams and rivulets far from their native soil; so was it now, every

one having life and property at stake, removed to some more peaceable part of the country.

Nevertheless, the designs of the instigators of the riots seemed to have perfectly succeeded, as far as they themselves were personally concerned; for a great number of years elapsed before confidence was restored in the neighbourhood; and in the mean time, the wealth and prosperity of the town, which for the last few years had been rapidly increasing, passed away. But the progress of machinery was not retarded: other places encouraged and fostered the outcasts; and these towns rose in importance, soon outstripping Blackburn in extent and population, and showing how impotent were the attempts made to destroy, or even to materially retard the development of the invention of spinning yarn by machinery. They extinguished, as they imagined, the light upon its first appearing; but what did they with the embers?

They allowed the wind to disperse them over the country, and by these it was quickly kindled into a blaze.

When Morland's party had proceeded a few miles they halted, and perceiving signs of life remaining, removed him from the cart, and placing him on the turf near a rivulet, bathed his face and bound up his wounds. Rough nurses, as they were, they saved his life and restored him to Betty—whose situation can be more easily imagined than described, when her husband was taken in, to all appearances, dead. But she was not a woman who gave way at once to misfortune; each additional affliction seemed only to add fresh energy to her mind; and instead of tormenting herself and every one around her with useless exclamations, too often the practice of females under similar circumstances, she devoted all her attention to her husband, leaving the issue to God.

Morland lingered three or four days in the same state, hanging between life

and death; but at the expiration of that time, his vigorous constitution obtained the mastery. His recovery, however, was slow and wearisome, though Betty nursed him with all the care she could bestow; and Harry, or his sister, now a blooming girl of sixteen, lightened the tediousness of the sick bed by reading, or forming bright projects for the future.

When Morland's health was sufficiently restored to enable him to walk out, his first care was to find a place in which to fix up his jennies, as he was anxious to be again at work. It was his intention to select, if possible, some retired spot, a short distance from the town.

One evening, accompanied by his son and daughter, he was allured by the mildness of the spring air to prolong his ramble further than usual. They frequently paused to admire the beauty of the scenery that surrounded them. The stream, on the banks of which they were strolling, murmured among the loose

stones in its rapid course from the hills. A short space in the centre of the valley, on either margin of the stream, was rich meadow-land, skirted with noble forest trees; the oak and sycamore appearing to luxuriate in the climate and soil. The trees became gradually more stunted as they crept up the hill sides, until they entirely disappeared, at the commencement of a wild moorland, the heather on which was growing to the summit of the hills, relieved only by large boulder stones. Numerous flocks of stock-doves, and other birds, added life and cheerfulness to the scene by their various cries and notes.

The little party were overtaken by an elderly gentleman, who entered into conversation with them. He appeared to be pleased with the admiration they expressed at the beauty of all they saw. He was the owner of the land on the opposite bank of the stream from that on which they stood; hence his gratification at hearing their praises bestowed upon it.

He was a good specimen of the north of England gentleman, one of the old school, and known in the neighbourhood as Squire Houghton. Being much prepossessed with Morland, he invited him to walk in his grounds whenever he chose. They frequently met afterwards, and Morland, at the Squire's request, related to him the leading incidents of his former life; and in him found a patron able and willing to protect him in his labours. A large house near the stream was placed at his disposal, together with the promise of pecuniary assistance if required.

Thus the family, after so many changes, had once more a home. Their small capital was spent in furnishing the house, and getting the jennies to work. The Squire instructed his steward, Mr. Marsh, to afford them all the assistance he could. Oftentimes in the performance of his duty his visits would be prolonged until evening, when he seldom refused Betty's in-

visitation to join them at their evening's repast; "He was so fond of mechanics," he said, "and this machine being quite new to him he took great interest in studying its principle, and watching it in action." This was the excuse he made to himself for his oft, and long protracted visits. But Betty received it in a different light: "had not the attractions of her daughter some influence over him?" For Mr. Marsh was a bachelor. This was the question she frequently put to herself, answering it in the affirmative. And the same conclusion was adopted by Mr. Marsh's friends, long before he acknowledged it to himself; which was not until a year had expired.

Time glided by in this peaceful manner without any accident occurring to destroy the happiness of the family. Morland's was not an inventive genius, he therefore continued working the frames on the original principle, without effecting any improvement of note. But another man, of a vigorous, energetic mind, had been

devoting his time and talents to the projection and construction of a new machine. This was a Mr. Crompton; he had once worked a short time with Morland, but leaving that neighbourhood had settled at the Hall i' th' Wood, near Bolton. This house stands on the edge of a cliff, at the foot of which flows the river Eagley. It is one of those old halls built with alternate timber and plaster, which, though so highly ornamental, and forming such picturesque objects in an English landscape, are now rarely to be met with. At one period it was surrounded by trees of immense size enclosing it in a gloomy shade; but these have all disappeared, leaving it exposed to view, and unprotected from the winds. The prospect from the cliff is still one of a most pleasing, rural nature; and the footpath which winds along the summit of the crag yet possesses attractions sufficient to make it a favourite resort of the inhabitants of the neighbouring town.

Such was the spot from which emanated the third great invention of the age. For about the same time, Arkwright, a name now familiar to every ear, had, through his own natural aptitude for mechanics, combined with a few fortuitous circumstances, and also, probably, incited by the fame of Hargreaves's jenny-frame, invented a machine for the spinning of coarse cotton warps; which, through their comparative cheapness, were advantageously substituted for the linen ones hitherto used. His machine, which became generally known as the water-frame, on account of its being driven by water-power instead of manual labour, as was the jenny, Mr. Arkwright secured to himself, in the year 1769, by a patent, the fruits of which remain to this day a monument alike of his fortune and his genius.

Mr. Crompton's machine was intended to supersede the jenny. And selecting the best motions from that and the water-frame, conjoined with some of his own

invention, he produced a machine which, although the ideas were not all original, was, as a whole, unique, being quite distinct from either of the other two. It was of light construction, and capable of containing from two to three hundred spindles. The fibres of cotton could be spun into a much finer and more even thread than on the jenny, and with less power than was required to turn the water-frame. The name he gave it was a plain, but a significant one—"The mule;" and simple as it is, it has resounded through Europe, and the shores of America have echoed back the sound. For the weavers were not slow in discovering the superior quality of the yarn produced by the machine, or the great benefit that accrued from using it. If a patent had secured all these combined advantages to the inventor, it is impossible to form any true conception of the immense wealth he would have acquired; but, like Hargreaves, he had the misfor-

tune to be too poor to reap the benefit of it himself. His mortification must have been very great when he saw others gathering in the golden harvest which ought, by right, to have been his own; and this feeling would be aggravated by the conduct of some who, whilst enjoying the gain, were like wild beasts, ready to tear him in pieces for even presuming to receive a slight recompence from the legislature.

Morland at once perceived the vast capabilities of Mr. Crompton's invention, and, with his thorough knowledge of the jenny-frame, could easily have constructed one similar; but he displayed a sense of honour not shown by many of his richer neighbours: he purchased one from the inventor.

When power began to be used instead of manual labour to drive machinery, it was discovered that this mode of propulsion was peculiarly adapted to the mule. Morland induced Mr. Marsh, now his

son-in-law, to join him, and, with the assistance of the squire— who had not forgotten his promise, though made years before,—a small mill was erected on the bank of the stream, whose crystal waters dashing over a wheel placed outside the building, sparkled as if in anger at being diverted from the course down which, for thousands of years, they had glided unmolested by aught save the trunk of some tree, dislodged by the wintry blast. By adopting the new plan, it was found that one man could work two mules at the same time, or, as it is now termed, “put up a pair of wheels.” As this reduced at once the demand for adult labour by one half, it would be natural to suppose the opposition to the innovation would have been violent; but the high wages, extremely out of proportion to those earned in any other laborious occupation, presented an inducement so alluring, that resistance quickly gave way before it. Nor did the changes introduced stop here.

The hours of labour were lengthened, and fixed, and a system began to develop itself which had no parallel, not even in slavery. So long as the water-wheel or steam-engine turned round—let that be fourteen or sixteen hours per day—so long must the machinery be kept in motion. Children commenced working in the mills when only six years of age, and, in many instances, even younger; and as they were too short when standing on the room floor, stages had to be erected round the machines, on which the poor urchins remained during the hours of labour. These regulations were brought into the system by degrees, and were the work of years.

One evening, when Betty was seated at her needle, her attention was drawn to an old beggar-woman who came up to the door. She appeared to be a truly wretched object,—haggard and careworn. A little boy, without shoes or stockings, held one of the tatters of her ragged

cloak. She solicited alms, not with the whine assumed by professional mendicants, but in the tone of voice she was accustomed to use on other occasions. Betty no sooner heard that voice than she recognised it in a moment. "Ha, Jenny! —is that you? Come in, in God's name." Neither of the two friends could have known the other by any outward sign; for such were the alterations made by twenty years' incessant care on the one, and the peace of mind which the other had for a few years enjoyed, that the modulations of the voice alone remained the same through their various changes of fortune. Betty was much stouter, and having on her evening dress of dark-brown silk, and a high cap of the style then worn, her appearance bespoke a rank superior to that in which Jenny had expected to find her.

Poor Jenny's story was a short one, but replete with sorrow; grief and mourning had been her hard lot since the day

when the family were driven from their native hills. From Bolton the steps of the exiles had been directed towards Nottingham, at which place Hargreaves expected to obtain some recompence for his labour. The commencement was promising, and bid fair to realize these hopes; but, tempted by the large profits that could be made, he launched out beyond his means. This embarrassed him, and though he laboured early and late, struggling against misfortunes, still calamities thickened around him, as if urged on by an evil destiny, to which he must inevitably succumb. His slight knowledge of the wiles employed in trade, caused him to fall an easy prey to sharpers, who, under pretence of releasing him from his difficulties, stripped him of everything he possessed. He died in the poorhouse, broken hearted. Jenny was left with a numerous family; her eldest son married, and the rest deserted her as soon as they were able to provide for themselves.

It was then she remembered the parting words Morland had used, and, taking one of her grandchildren, its parents being dead, set out for Lancashire. But her troubles were not ended; for, upon arriving there, she found everything changed. The old generation had almost entirely disappeared, and those few to whom she could make herself known, gave her the chilling reception that poverty too often meets with from the more fortunate of mankind. All the information she obtained from them about Morland was, that he left the neighbourhood, along with many others, a dozen years before, and they supposed he had gone to a town about ten miles off. Thither she determined to proceed, as the possibility of meeting with that family was the only ray of hope remaining for her on this side the grave. "And then," said she, to the little barefooted companion of her wanderings, "if they driven us fro their door, death 'ill soon relieve me from the cares

of a miserable life."—"But what'll become o' me, gron'ny?"—"God 'ill tak care of yo, child," replied she. If she imagined for a single moment, that either Betty or her husband would be actuated by the sordid spirit she had witnessed in all to whom her necessities had been made known, she did them an injustice. Her plan was to beg from door to door; and, in this manner, had at last stumbled upon the right one.

Her reception was a most hearty one; and the sincere pleasure Betty evinced at meeting with her old friend, added not a little to Jenny's happiness. When the squire was informed that Hargreaves's widow had arrived in the "Happy Valley," as he termed it, he sent for her to the Hall; and, after hearing her story, settled her in a neat cottage on the outskirts of his grounds, in which she passed the remainder of her life. Her grandson was taken by Morland into the mill.

The christening of their grandson was looked forward to by Betty and her hus-

band with extreme pleasure. Henry Morland had married the daughter of a respectable yeoman, who held a farm under the squire; and, as that gentleman availed himself of every opportunity which presented itself for increasing the happiness of those around him, he, on this occasion, insisted upon being one of the sponsors for the infant. This was an unexpected honour, and one that raised the family not a little in the estimation of their neighbours. The ceremony was performed in the private chapel at the Hall; after which a number of the villagers and tenantry assembled on the lawn, passing the rest of the day in rustic games and sports; merriment and innocent pleasure reigning triumphant, under the auspices of their generous host.

“And young and old come forth to play
On a sunshine holyday,
Till the livelong daylight fail:
Then to the spicy nut-brown ale.”

Morland's intercourse with society, more polished than that amongst which his youth and early manhood had been

spent, tended but little to soften the rough dialect peculiar to his native hills. "Ha should nobbod mak a foo' o' mysel'," said he, "if ha wer to try t' spayk loike th' gentlefolk, so ist neer oss." And this independence of manner made him a great favourite with his patron.

The young squire and Henry Morland were upon still more familiar terms,—they were inseparable sporting companions; and as the fox yet lurked about, and grouse, pheasants, and other game abounded in the neighbourhood, much of the young men's time was spent in the enjoyment of hunting, and every sort of field sports.

Betty had usurped the office of chief nurse on the festal occasion; and, instead of joining in the gaieties at the Hall, she was quietly seated by the cradle, as though the infant sleeping in it were really her own. Jenny, who paid a daily visit to her old gossip, was her only companion. Their conversation had turned upon their

troubles and afflictions, now happily ended. "Ah, Jenny, lass," said the dame, "ha wish your gude mon could a seen yo noo, yo looken so weel, it ud o' done his oud een good; but it wer th' will o' God as he shudna stop here lung, an' it's not for us t' ax why." And, indeed, it rarely falls to the lot of man to enjoy such an amount of happiness as that now granted to the inhabitants of the Valley. And, to judge according to human reasonings, their happiness promised to be of long continuance.

CHAPTER IV..

"But times are altered ; trade's unfeeling train
Usurp the land and dispossess the swain ;
Those healthful sports that grac'd the peaceful scene,
Liv'd in each look, and brighten'd all the green ;
These, far departing, seek a kinder shore,
And rural mirth and manners are no more."

GOLDSMITH.

"INDEED, my dear sir, the excuses of your penitent friend, Jack Houghton, may be very plausible to any one not acquainted with the circumstance ; and the summary manner in which he has been dealt with, will, I have no doubt, be termed harsh and tyrannical. But the very apologies themselves tend more fully to convince me, that he is the very man who originated, and afterwards took the lead in the turn-out."

"I may have been too hasty, Mr. Morland," replied he to whom this was ad-

dressed, "in the conclusion that I have arrived at. Perhaps my recollection of his large family, pleaded more effectually with me in his favour than the arguments he used. The blow to them will be serious."

"How many children has he, sir?"

"There were five working, two girls and three boys; and two at home under age."

"I knew he had a number of children in the mill," continued Mr. Morland; "and on that account, although by no means a good spinner, he was a desirable servant. For in prosperous times, like these we now have, piecers, and the younger hands who tend for the weavers, are more difficult to obtain than adults. Now, Houghton presuming upon this, and imagining he was too valuable a man for me to lose, took a course which has brought this calamity upon himself; and not only so, but entailed an amount of misery on his family that will be long re-

membered by them. I have had numberless complaints preferred against him by the manager, and should have dismissed him years ago, but for the peculiar incidents which have connected the two families together for three generations."

"I am glad for the sake of the rest of your workpeople, Mr. Morland, that the affair has been amicably arranged. It is impossible to estimate the serious consequences that might have ensued if the large number of hands you employ had ceased work."

"We are about to adopt a course, sir, which will, I imagine, put a stop to turn-outs for this purpose in future."

"May I venture, Mr. Morland, to ask what that is?"

"Certainly; it is this: in the agricultural counties of England the children are so numerous, in proportion to the employment there is for them, that instead of being a support and blessing to their

parents or friends, and maintaining them in sickness or old age, they are a clog and a burden; which, as long as the father is in health, must be borne by him: and thus, instead of bringing "grist to the mill," they keep the whole family poor, and are always upon the very verge of poverty; so that, if the father is removed by death, or disabled from work, the whole family immediately become chargeable to the parish. Now, in the manufacturing districts, the orphan children of the poor are, in general, willingly adopted by their relations; for after the age of thirteen a child earns more than the cost of his maintenance. There is, also, another cause which, perhaps, more frequently than in former days, tends to overstock the poor-houses. When a female has been unfortunate, instead of the fault being soon forgotten, or treated in the lenient manner it would be here, she is there looked upon as one who has irrecoverably disgraced

herself. She therefore flies at once to the workhouse, in order to be out of the way of her former associates. Now, my idea was, that by relieving the agricultural districts from this surplus population, we should be conferring a benefit, not only upon the children themselves, but upon the community likewise. Acting under this impression, I wrote to several Union Boards, all, however, with one exception, met it with a decided negative."

"And which Board of Guardians, sir, coincided with your views?"

"That of Hardston, in the county of Suffolk," said Mr. Morland.

"But, my dear sir," replied his friend, "you do not mean to say that the poor creatures are to be brought here by compulsion?"

"They will not be exactly compelled," said he; "we can scarcely call it by so hard a term. But I will read the letter I received from the clerk of that board; it commences thus—

‘ MR. MORLAND,

‘ SIR,—I have been instructed to inform you, that the letter containing a proposal to take a number of pauper children out of the poor-house of this Union, with the intention to employ them in a cotton-mill, was laid before the Guardians at the last meeting of the Board, and met with the approval of the majority. The Board are of opinion, that it would not be prudent to send any child under thirteen years of age, or any young person older than nineteen; as none above that age will voluntarily leave their native county, so strong are their prejudices; but these will soon be overcome in the younger subjects. We shall first canvass the inmates, and ascertain how many of them are desirous to change their mode of life. And as these will be more tractable and wishful to remain with you than the others, there will be no necessity for apprenticing them. But the Board will require that those children who do not act by choice in the

matter, shall be bound to you for periods of time, varying according to their respective ages. A change of clothing, suitable for their intended occupation, will be provided by the Union. But there will be expenses incurred which will not come within our province, and these you will have to defray. If these suggestions meet your views, please address your future correspondence to the Board, through me, as I have received full powers to act in the matter.

‘ I am,

‘ Your most obedient servant,

‘ BRUTUS HAWKE,

‘ *Clerk to the Guardians of the
Hardston Union.*’

‘ July 3, 1845.

“ Now, Mr. Wynn, you will understand the scheme better; and being a native of one of the southern counties will know something of the manners and dispositions of the people. What I want is, your opinion of its practicability.”

“Well, sir,” rejoined Mr. Wynn, “I shall give you my candid opinion upon the subject, as you have requested me to do so; had it been otherwise I should have made no further remarks upon a matter in which our sentiments will be so much at variance. In the first place, being a clergyman, I shall begin with this consideration—how may the change affect the moral character of the individuals themselves? Will it not suffer by the great alteration which must of necessity be made in all the social relations of life? There will certainly be new pleasures, and new companions; whilst the natural consequence of working the two sexes together in the heated rooms of the mill, will be to place temptations constantly before them. Now this of itself would be a severe trial to persons who have been accustomed to cool out-door employments; but when we couple to it the levity of most of the factory workers, their language abounding in expressions that convey the vilest of thoughts, then, I say,

I cannot imagine how, inexperienced as they naturally will be in the wiles of town life, they can possibly remain uncontaminated."

"I think you draw too dark a picture, sir. My idea is, that the habits of their former mode of life will be sufficient to protect them from these temptations."

"It is probable, Mr. Morland, that, for a short time at first, they will shun with disgust the immorality they see around them; but vice is to all more alluring than virtue, and these children not being aided by the warning of parents, will be gradually taken into the vortex. When that is the case, sir, I am afraid we shall find that the seceder from virtue, like all other renegades, will be even worse than those he joins."

"You appear to take for granted, Mr. Wynn, that all our factory operatives are vicious; are there none free from vice?"

"Many, sir: I speak of the bulk. But to resume the argument. The long

confinement in the mill will depress their spirits, and have an injurious effect on their health; there will be very few whose constitutions will be able to support it."

"My dear sir, I do not see what your favourite topic, the Ten Hours Bill, has to do with the point in question."

"Just as much, Mr. Morland, as the rivulet has with the spring from which it takes its rise. I am perfectly convinced that if you live to see that Bill the law of the land, you will then acknowledge it to be both humane and beneficial. We will contrast the every day life of one of these children you have sent for, with that it must lead when here. He may be the child of a farm labourer; if so, in seed-time and harvest he worked in the fields, very likely twelve or thirteen hours each day. But the waving woods were the only walls that then surrounded him; the blue sky the only ceiling; the carolling of the lark awoke him in the morning, the thrush with its numerous and merry

notes enlivened the day's toil; and upon returning in the evening, the sweet but plaintive song of the nightingale, as he sung in the ash hard by the peaceful cottage, was the only sound that reached his ear. But now this fair scene will be exchanged for an artificial existence,—one we have constructed for ourselves, and in which nature does not appear to have been, in the slightest degree, consulted. He will rise at half-past five o'clock, in order to be at the mill when it 'gates,' as they term the starting of the engine; and there he will be deafened by the unceasing noise of the machinery. On the cheerful spring mornings his labour will begin at sunrise—half an hour earlier than in winter—so that a little gas may be saved; the day glides on, but the sun does not shine for him. The hour and a half allowed for meals is too short a time for him to enjoy much fresh air; and when the engine stops in the evening it is twilight—the sun has set."

“ But that is not the case in summer; they can ramble to their hearts’ content.”

“ They might,” continued Mr. Wynn, “ if their bodily vigour had not been exhausted, by standing twelve hours during the day. I remember the answer a man returned upon my suggesting to him the propriety of sending his children into the fields after mill hours,—‘ Ha bless yo, when they’n gotten summot teyt they cairn um dane, an ther noddin ther yeds afore theyn bin i’t’h’ ase mony minnits.’ ”

“ But we shall break these children into the system gradually,” said Mr. Morland; “ they will require training, like colts: we must send them to school to be educated, and take good care of their health; whilst you, my dear sir, must keep them to their religious duties.”

“ You may rely that nothing, my humble abilities can effect, shall be neglected,” replied his friend. “ They will, most of them, there is no doubt, have been educated with a due regard for

religion, but all that must soon be forgotten. The houses of the men for whom they must work, will, in future, be the homes of these poor orphans; and can they be regarded by these strangers with paternal affection?"

"I shall give orders, sir, that no distinction must be made between them and the other portions of the family."

"I have invariably found," said the reverend gentleman, "throughout the whole of my clerical experience, that when a child, whose lips never before gave utterance to an oath, is brought into contact with others of his own age, to whom cursing is a common form of speech, he is sure to contract the vile habit of his companions. Now, the children here are fearfully addicted to this vice; but still, one cannot—ought not to blame them for it. I have frequently heard used by a mother to her child, language which was a disgrace to human nature. Nor can I give you a better

idea of the extent to which this wickedness is carried, than by repeating the words of a gentleman, who, when discoursing with more zeal than discretion upon this subject, from the pulpit, once alarmed his hearers by informing them, 'that such was the entire disregard evinced by many mothers, either for the moral or physical welfare of their offspring, that even on the coldest, darkest, winter nights, children who could neither walk nor talk, might be seen running about the streets blaspheming their Maker.' But I see you are getting impatient; I have been dwelling too long upon the moral objections."

"You must remember, my dear sir," said Mr. Morland, "that a great many of the evils you have enumerated, will be counterbalanced by the superior way in which they will be clothed and fed, when compared with what they were accustomed to when in their wild state."

"As for their clothing, Mr. Morland,

I am ashamed to see, not in this village only, but in the streets of the neighbouring town, many a little fellow with the mere apology for dress about his person; and their food, do they eat it with that hungry pleasure which an out-door labourer feels, whilst, seated under the hedge, he cuts with his pocket-knife his bread and onion?"

"I will not say they do, sir, but the nutritious properties of what they do take are so much greater, that a less quantity will suffice. They often get meat; which, with the exception of bacon, is never tasted by agricultural labourers."

"I am afraid, sir, that argument will tell very much against you."

"Why so?"

"If the people here are fed with more nourishing food, and clothed in a superior manner, how is it that the population of the agricultural counties excels ours so very much in size, strength, and longevity?"

"The two first points I must give up,

if the nature of their employment will not afford sufficient reasons for it. To the third I should answer, that life in large towns is always of shorter duration than in rural places. I think the returns will show that south Lancashire is more healthy than London, or almost any sea-port town in the kingdom."

"But a large portion of the inhabitants of south Lancashire do not reside in towns," replied Mr. Wynn. "The whole country is dotted with villages, and hamlets. Take my district for instance: I have in it from three to four thousand souls, and if the mean proportion of the duration of life here is only twenty-five years, to how low a standard must it be brought in the populous towns? My firm conviction, sir, is, that some measure ought to be adopted for curtailing the hours of labour, if the race is to be maintained, even at what it now is."

"In a cotton mill, changes amongst the hands are always being made, so that

half your villagers may have lived during the best portion of their lives in the neighbouring town ; or, perhaps, only enjoyed the release from it a few months."

"And they return to their old haunts with no perceptible change in the colour of their cheeks—no ruddier than when they left them.

"Legislative interference, for which you are an advocate, Mr. Wynn, is what I neither can, nor ever shall acknowledge to be just in principle. Will the philanthropy of the nation be sincere enough to induce it to indemnify us for the loss we shall sustain? One-sixth of the utility of our machinery will be taken away. Thus naturally increasing the cost of producing, and that, too, in the face of the advantage our foreign competitors already possess. In most of the continental kingdoms, restriction upon juvenile labour is merely nominal, whilst in others there is, I believe, none at all. The wages in

some countries are lower for sixteen hours than we shall have to pay for ten."

"Those, Mr. Morland, were the reasons alleged against the first Factory Bill; and I leave you to judge whether experience has proved them to be true or not."

"Why not leave the point to be settled between the masters and the operatives?"

"So said private adventurers upon the first discovery of Peru, when they worked the poor Indians to death in the mines. I blame no individual master for what is the fault of the system. But I cannot imagine, sir, that the Supreme Being would call into existence so many thousands of human creatures, for the sole purpose of spending that existence in the mechanical employment of spinning and weaving."

"They have the Sundays, Mr. Wynn; that is a day for relaxation."

"I am sorry to see the sanctity and rest of even that day, sir, too often destroyed: there are, I suppose, alterations

required to be made in the mills, which cannot be effected whilst the machinery is in motion. The necessity of doing this on Sundays will be obviated by the new Bill. I heard of a person declaring that instead of ten hours per day, he thought seven days per week, and twelve hours each day, quite little enough; and yet you are willing to commit the welfare of thousands to the tender mercy of individuals like these; no law is too stringent for such men."

"The government, however, will be wise if they know when to stop. I do not think, sir, any further interference would be quietly submitted to. There will ever be found men ingenious enough to discover some way of evading any act Parliament may choose to pass."

"If any such there be, Mr. Morland, I hope they will not style themselves Englishmen; as no one doing that could be a loyal subject of her Majesty the

Queen; who, by giving her royal assent to a Short Time Bill, would express her gracious pleasure that the poor factory workers should live."

"We appear, Mr. Wynn, to have overlooked the fact that the county of Suffolk may be considered, in some measure, a manufacturing county, or at least some portions of it: and amongst these are numerous woollen establishments. Now it is natural to suppose that most of the children will have worked in some one of these; and if so, your chief objection falls to the ground."

"I grant it, if your conjecture prove correct, which I think is very improbable: and for this reason—the manufactories of Suffolk are on a very limited scale, and confined to certain localities. Now, it would scarcely be wisdom in the Poor-law authorities to rob the county of any who have learnt the trade carried on there, whilst the mass of the paupers con-

sist of those who are likely to remain burdensome to them. But, after all, Mr. Morland, the question is simply this—will you, by removing these poor children from their native fields, and placing them in a cotton-mill, either increase their happiness or cause them to lead better lives than they otherwise might have done?”

“Philanthropists would answer in the negative; but time will solve it with most truth. I can only say that here we are short of labourers, in the county of Suffolk they have a redundance, which they appear as willing to part with as we are to receive. But here comes Frank.”

“Is your son favourable to the new plan?”

“He was very much opposed to it at first,” replied Mr. Morland. “Well, Frank, Mr. Wynn is arguing strongly against our new labour scheme.”

“I fully expected that, sir,” said Frank Morland, as he shook the reverend gentle-

man by the hand; "his view of it is not a commercial one."

We will leave the trio to discuss the subject, and looking around us examine the changes which have been effected in the happy valley, during the last half century.

CHAPTER V.

"Like leaves on trees the race of men is found,
Now green in youth, now withering on the ground;
Another race the following spring supplies;
They fall successive, and successive rise;
So generations in their course decay;
So flourish these, when those are passed away."

POPE'S HOMER.

THE room in which the conversation just related took place, was one in the old part of the hall, once inhabited by Squire Houghton, and called the oaken parlour. The furniture, not only of this room, but throughout the house, being of that costly but truly English material. Two of the oak panels had been removed, and their places filled up by portraits, one of these is that of an old man with straight grey hair shading his forehead; the face is marked with a scar, as if a dangerous wound had been inflicted. The other is

the portrait of an elderly female; though not, apparently, a polished lady, still there is a pleasing amiableness in the expression of her countenance, which, had the artist put forth all his powers of flattery, could not have been made more agreeable. At the matron's feet lies a spinster's wheel, which being represented thickly coated with dust, was emblematical of its having been long disused. These pictures, though not valuable as works of art, are highly prized by their owner.

The Hall was enlarged about twenty years ago, but the modern portion is scarcely to be distinguished from that of older date, as the same style of architecture has been carried out, and the whole bears one black, sombre appearance.

The ivy continues to flourish round the old chapel, burying the walls, and climbing to the summit of the belfrey. The interior is preserved in its original state, though divine service has ceased to be performed in it. The gardens are neater

kept, and the plant-houses more profusely stocked than formerly; whilst the grounds display an almost lavish expenditure of money. But accomplished with good taste, and not out of a mere vulgar ostentation, very frequently exhibited by men in the same station of life as the present owner of the estate. Still there is something deficient, the flower-beds are not so well arranged with the simple, but beautiful blossoms of our own native land; what there are consist chiefly of rare and expensive foreign plants, little adapted to the damp, variable climate of that portion of Lancashire.

We enter the high road at the lodge, an elegant little structure, of the same date as the modern portion of the Hall. After passing this, we turn to the right, and, at the distance of a quarter of a mile, the valley opens upon our view. But how changed the whole scene! Nothing, not even nature itself, except on the summit of the hills, retains the aspect

it wore half a century ago. Then, how beautiful the woods of mingled trees appeared! The graceful birch, sycamore, and stout oak, luxuriated in a congenial climate, whilst here and there the pendant boughs of the willow swept the brook. The ear was gladdened with the sound of the huntsman's horn, or soothed by the lowing of the cattle, impatiently awaiting the hour for milking; and, as evening approached, the angler might have been observed, intent upon his sport.

But what do we find remaining of this once peaceful, rural picture? All has vanished—passed away like a dream. A new race has sprung up, peopling the valley with its thousands of inhabitants, who, had they been the malicious genii of Eastern fable, could hardly have made greater havock of the beauties of nature. And the amazement is heightened by the noise which assails the ear; it is a sound resembling the murmur of some mighty

cataract, when its roar is deadened by an intervening hill. But we shall not be able to solve the phenomenon without assistance. Let us imagine ourselves addressing the old man who is approaching us, as we stand on the brow of the hill. He has a small can and handkerchief in his hand. We may conclude, judging from his aged appearance, that he is one of the original stock.

"Fine evening, this?"

"Vare, sur."

"Are you a native of this part of the country?"

"Au wur born up o' th' hill soide here seventy-eight yer agone, come next kesmus."

"Then you must have witnessed many changes here during that time, and be able to inform us what that monstrous building, directly opposite, is. The one resembling the broadside of a ship of the line, or, more properly, from its vast

height, the perforated cliff of some iron-bound coast."

"That's a cotton mill. It belongs to Mester Morland."

"And that low building, with the roof glittering in the sun's rays, as if it were one sheet of glass, and extending over such an immense space of ground!"

"That's his pare-loom shed. It's um as is makin' that rumblin' neyse as yo yearn. An thoos lung rows o' cottages is aw his."

"And, my good man, what is the height of that column, which raises its top almost to the skies? If it were not thickly coated with soot, we should have supposed that the object of its erection had been to perpetuate the fame of a Nelson or a Wellington, so well is the stone-work wrought, and so beautiful is it finished."

"We dunnot caw um columns here. That chimbly's a hundred an' eighty feet

tut top; un a bonny pipe it is to. There wer' neithin' o' this here when I wer a lad; it's haw sprung up sin th' Morlands coom t' this country soide."

"Then you remember old Morland?"

"Remember him! ha'st neer forg'et other him or th' oud squire, Squire Houghton. They wer terrable thick, an' th' squire sent his money abate like waiter. But he deed when he wer just at th' best; an' it's bin a good job for oud Morland's grandson, him as 'as th' property na, as his grandfather dident goo wum at th' same tyme, or he met o' bin like Jack Houghton is na."

"And how did that occur?"

"Why, yoo seen, soon afther him as we always cawn th' squire deed, he wer a gentlemon, for sure wer he, th' son turned ate gradely wild; an' him an' young Morland spread an' gambled till th' squire's property wer aw clean gon'.— But ha mun send th' baggin into th' factory, or th' wenches 'ill wonder what's do."

"You have some one working in the mill, then?"

"Hi. Th' oud woman un me kept urr own childer away. But weer not so weel off as we ust be, so we wer like'rt send th' grondchilder; but we shouldn't a done it if we hadn't bin obleeged, for they getten good wages wee reeling when they've full wark."

"Well: but what became of the two young men?"

"Th' young squire mashed hissels up wi' drink, an' laft his wife an' childer weate a shillin, for who wer nobbut a farmer's dowter. Young Morland, th' oud chap's son, wer kilt otter huntin' i'th' stream here; but his father didn't fret mitch abate him, for he took th' chilt,—there wer but one, a wee bit of o brat, an' brout him up under his own hee. An then, when he grew up an' geet wed, him an' th' ould chap went into th' Haw; it had studden empty a deal a' years then, but they soon put it to reets again."

"And what became of old Dame Morland? Did she live to see all this?"

"Hoo wur buried ten year afore th' oud felly, for he lived at th' Haw goin' a five yer."

"He must have been an older man than you, then, when he died."

"Th' monument i'th' church sais eighty-three; an' he wer as hearty as a buck till th' last."

Whilst we have been conversing with the old man, evening has cast its shade over the scene; and in a moment, as if by magic, each window in the mills below us pours forth a flood of light, until the whole cluster of buildings appears like a vast magazine of nebulous stars, out of which a second milkyway was about to be spread across the heavens. The glow is frequently obscured by the forms of the workers, as they flit past the windows. A large mill, when illuminated with gas, and enclosed in the gloom of night, is an interesting object to any one,

but more especially to a stranger; with him the wonder is increased by the difficulty of comprehending how so brilliant a light is used without danger amongst such combustible materials.

Our next anxious inquiry is, what has become of the old mill, with its water-wheel, and the comfortable cottage adjoining? Why is the valley so bare of timber, or the natural bed of the stream so black, slimy, and without water? We are informed that the old mill has been removed, and its site is occupied by the more modern erections; these have swept away all traces of the older buildings, which, whilst giving a little life to the picture, added to its beauty, whereas those we now see are sufficient to deprive the most lovely scenery of its leading charms. The trees have fallen before the woodman's axe, either for the use of the carpenter or the coalminer. The birch boughs are now supporting, instead of their delicate foliage, the hills upon

which they grew; and, as to the stream, from the very springs of the rivulets to which it owes its birth, until it unites with a larger river at a distance of fifteen miles, the whole volume of its waters are borne in artificial dikes, from one reservoir to another; nor, until heavy rains cause these to overflow, does the bed often contain more than the mere tricklings from the banks. Its colour is easily accounted for; every spring, carefully collected from the hill side, is made useful; first by the bleacher, who turns it away strongly impregnated with drugs; the printer next receives it, and changes the white hue it had acquired into one of a cloudy black, with a tinge of purple in it; this puts an end to that portion of its services, and it is now unfit for any use except that of driving water-wheels, or condensing steam. Contaminations are now added in the shape of gas-tar and other things, which render it thick and sluggish; the reservoirs are soon choked

up with mud, and the process of what is called "sloughing" has to be frequently resorted to. This is allowing the water, upon a sudden flood, to rush through the reservoirs into the bed of the stream, burying its stones in slime and cinders. Otter and trout are mentioned as things that once were; their place is supplied by water-rats, which harbour about it in great numbers.

The surface of the country is covered with small mounds resembling large mole hills, or miniature volcanoes. Their hue is mostly lead-colour, tinted with black; and, as no vegetation grows upon them, they make the scene one of extreme sterility. These are exhausted coal mines, preferable, certainly, to those still being worked: for to the offence to the eye is added, the smoke and steam from the high-pressure engines, used for winding the coal up the shaft,—these are continually coughing and sobbing as though some monster were confined in the small

wooden shed. At the dead of night this unearthly noise can often be heard for miles around.

But, hark! The hoarse rumbling noise that ascended from the buildings has ceased,—not like the gradual rolling away of distant thunder, but instantaneously. In a few moments, hundreds of men, women, and children can be seen by the faint moonlight, hurrying home—“work-worn and sad”—after their long day’s labour: not to enjoy the fruits of it, but to acquire strength to enable them to perform the same amount the following day. The diminutive stature of the people proves this. They have lost that strong muscular appearance which once characterized the inhabitants of the Lancashire hills.

So the infant, over whose early years old dame Morland watched with an almost maternal affection, survived to requite her care, and is now the wealthy proprietor of the domain formerly the

property of Squire Houghton, the master of the cotton works on the stream, and owner of a great part of the village. Of this estate, the larger portion was bequeathed to him by his grandfather; the rest he acquired by a steady application to trade, being always held in high esteem for his honourable and upright conduct. A thorough knowledge of his business enabled him to amass wealth whilst many others were losing it. This he accomplished by keeping pace with the times, and adapting his machinery to it, so as not to be left behind in the great race of competition, which the very system itself brought along with it, and eventually reduced alike the remuneration of labour and the value of its produce.

Mr. Morland's good fortune was attributed by those who were envious of it more to chance than foresight. But nevertheless, his advice was eagerly sought after, though it often proved unpleasant to the applicant.

As a master, he was respected, but not beloved by his workpeople, their regard rarely exhibiting itself by any marked affection. He was not so tyrannical as to be hated by any; but not having accustomed himself when young to be free or converse much with that class, so he now seldom became acquainted with their domestic trials, or entered into the little troubles that constantly beset their path, and this is the surest and, indeed, the only way of gaining the hearts of those who may be beneath us in worldly rank.

The gentleman whom we found with Mr. Morland, and left discussing the good or evil likely to ensue from the scheme the latter gentleman had just propounded, was the Rev. Mr. Wynn, incumbent of the church in the village. The edifice had been built and endowed by the present Mr. Morland; it stood on a rising ground, and formed the termination of the straggling village, at the opposite extremity of which were the mills.

The style, early English gothic; and, as no expense had been spared, it was pronounced to be one of the most beautifully finished and correct fabrics, in point of style, of any built by modern architects. Mr. Morland waived his title of patron, and gave up the presentation into the hands of the bishop of the diocese. This he did to escape the unpleasantness almost invariably ensuing from lay appointments. But, at the same time, he suggested to his lordship what he thought were the qualifications necessary for a clergyman to possess who took charge of a population such as would, in this instance, be committed to his care.

His lordship was flattered by the compliment; and after giving himself a little trouble in the selection, fixed upon the present incumbent, "a man," as his lordship expressed it, past "that flowery age, at which clergymen too often neglect their spiritual duties for worldly ambition, or for the sake of paying that attention to

the fleece which was intended for the flock." He was about ten or twelve years the senior of Mr. Morland, and a more energetic man, or one better adapted to benefit a manufacturing district, could not easily have been found. Though an Oxford man, he was not imbued with the high notions on some doctrinal points held by a number of the young clergy of the present day, who have graduated at that University. Nor did he fall into the opposite and almost as dangerous extreme termed "low church." It grieved him to hear one clergyman style himself "high church," whilst another rejoiced in a contrary appellation. When asked to which party he belonged, he would answer "I am a churchman; and as a clergyman of the Church of England, recognise neither one nor the other." His discourse was confined principally to subjects adapted to the capacity of his hearers; not dwelling upon controverted topics, nor insisting

upon the necessity of reviving trivial forms and ceremonies, long become obsolete. By his mild persuasive manner he became the instrument of reforming many abandoned characters; exhorting the aged to leave, and the young to avoid entering the paths of sin: thus "he allured to brighter worlds and led the way."

This line of conduct appeared more judicious, when the state of religion in his district was compared with the position it held in the two adjoining ones; for in both of these a great number of Ranters and other classes of fanatics flourished. In the one, fostered by the laxity of the incumbent, the Rev. Mr. Dormitor; in the other, by a love of power evinced by the Rev. Mr. Priestly. The former gentleman held a small living, the stipend of which, unfortunately, was in no degree dependent upon his own exertions; but derived from part of the revenue of an estate in the neighbourhood, which had

been "encumbered" with it, as the gentleman now in possession of the property called it, a couple of hundred years previously by some God-fearing ancestor. Mr. Dormitor's doctrines had a slight tinge of Calvinism in them, just sufficient to quiet his conscience; pretending that nothing more was required from him than to remind his flock they were destined either for heaven or hell. He therefore left them to obtain the former if they could; but if not, it was beyond his power to prevent their going to the latter. Mr. Priestly, on the other hand, kept his district in a constant state of agitation; he was the very opposite from Mr. Dormitor, never admitting that the laity had a right to follow their own judgment on any religious point. "How," said he, "can they know what is right and proper for them to believe, or do; for if so, where is the utility of my spending a life of study?" This argument, if such it can be called,

satisfied none but the ignorant, whilst it disgusted many; but fully answered one of the ends for which he designed it, that of keeping himself before the public. Hoping, after a little while, to be made a martyr of; but in this he had, so far, been disappointed.

CHAPTER VI.

"Mark where indolence and pride,
Sooth'd by flattery's tinkling sound,
Go, softly rolling, side by side,
Their dull but daily round."

GRAY.

No sooner had it become generally known in the village that Jack Houghton had been dismissed from Mr. Morland's employ, or, as they themselves termed it, "getten bagg'd," than the keeper of the provision shop called upon him for the arrears of his account. The system practised amongst the poor of that neighbourhood is this: when a stranger obtains work at the mill, most probably he has not a farthing of ready money, so he goes to a trust shop, informs them where he is working, and that he intends shopping with them. He is allowed to have pro-

visions and other necessities, ostensibly to be settled for on the first pay-day. But as he is not pressed to adhere to this arrangement, and having some more urgent debts to meet, the new one is permitted to run on, until a debt has accumulated, large or small, according to the opinion the shopkeeper may entertain of the present position, or future prospects of his customer.

When his credit is exhausted, he commences paying a few shillings each week; but one or two days' stoppage of the mill, or, more commonly, a fit of drunkenness, again raises the debt to its original amount. Thus, a family will have a debt of a few pounds hanging over them for years; and which, more frequently than otherwise, is never paid. This risk the shopkeeper is aware of when the agreement is made; therefore, to make the chances equal, he charges from ten to twenty per cent. more than the ready money trader would; and that, too, for

an inferior article. The weekly earnings of Jack and his family had been from sixty to seventy shillings; yet, on the Monday morning, it was all squandered, so utterly improvident were they; literally, "taking no thought for the morrow," but "frolicking while it was May."

As it had appeared very likely that the family were permanently settled at Mr. Morland's mills, they were allowed an unusual extent of credit. But, now that the calamity had happened, Jack was very cool about the matter; nothing better than an acknowledgment of the debt, and a promise to pay when he got work, could be extracted from him; and with this his creditors were obliged to content themselves, the weekly income of the family being reduced to the club allowance of fifteen shillings.

The next day Jack was sitting over the fire in a melancholy mood, not caused by regret for his recent foolish conduct so much as by vexation at the ingratitude

displayed by his fellow-workmen, who allowed him to be sacrificed without one word of remonstrance on their part; and his place, too, was filled up by one who had privately urged him on in the affair; the last circumstance galled him more than any other. The only consolation he could deduce from his reflections was, that he imagined the worst was now known; and, therefore, the sooner he set about recovering employment the better it would be for him.

His meditations were disturbed by the latch of the outer door being quietly lifted; he turned round just in time to see the head and shoulders of a raw-boned Scotchman disappear from the partly opened door. Jack shouted to him, with an oath, to come in; he entered, displaying an air of assured confidence. He was one of that class of men who are designated "Scotchmen," and under that title solely are but too well known in the populous districts of Lancashire, which

are much infested by them. After opening his pack on the table, he selected from its contents a gown-piece and two showy cotton shawls, of Paisley manufacture; these he hung over his arm, in order to give full display to their attractive colours.

"These shawls," said he, addressing Jack's wife, "will mack your lasses look as braw as fine ladies."

Jack had been eyeing him very closely, and was not aware the things had been ordered by his daughters.

"Tha's gotten tut rung shop to-day, mon, for ween nout spend upo' sick like tackle as them; so tha met as well put um i'tha pack agen, an' tack thesel' off."

His wife perceived that a full disclosure was inevitable; she therefore thought to obtain an advantage by prefacing it with a little abuse. The epithets she used towards her husband were indicative neither of love nor respect. She reminded him of

the money he spent at the beer-shop, whilst she had scarcely sufficient to provide meat, let alone clothes; and if it had not been for this "felly" giving long credit, they should have been in rags before then.

Hér harangue was rather a lengthy one, and given in an energetic and loud pitched tone of voice. It completely roused Jack's mettle. He stood up with a frown of portentous blackness, and demanded from the man how much he wanted from him? Sandy pulled out his note-book, and running his eye over the pages, informed him that, including what he had brought that day, the debt would be fifteen pounds and some odd shillings, besides twenty-three shillings for interest.

Jack took the shawls, and, rolling them up in the pack, deposited the whole, with the assistance of his foot, in the middle of the lane. He then, advancing his hand to within a few inches of the fire-poker, said, "Theer, pack off after thy trumpery

traps, or I'll gee thee sick a hidein' as thou's not gotten sin tha coom fro' that lousy country o' thine."

Sandy, though large of limb, had the usual amount of prudence for which his countrymen are proverbial; he trusted rather to the arm of the law than his own, which he might, perhaps, have lacked courage to use, and therefore made a precipitate retreat, which he covered by menaces of vengeance by law; though, if Jack might have had his choice, he would have preferred a reference to the god of battles, by the summary process of a Lancashire "milling." The threats, however, were sufficient to warn him of what was about to follow, and he soon made up his mind as to the most judicious course he could adopt, to escape from the consequences of this rough reception of his creditor.

After dark, he called a few of his neighbours together, informed them of his difficulties, and requested them to assist

in making what is termed "a moonlight flit." As cheating a Scotchman is considered not only quite fair, but even meritorious, they readily acquiesced; and, before midnight, all the furniture was removed to a place of safety, to the no small consternation of Sandy, when he called the next day, and who now willingly compromised the matter for one-third of the original sum, the payments to commence when the family obtained work, which they did shortly after at Mr. Marsh's mill.

Jack was not long in discovering that his imprudence had entailed upon him a much more laborious employment than any he had previously been used to; and that, too, without benefiting his family. He was placed on a set of treble deckers; but as this must be unintelligible to persons not acquainted with spinning machinery, it will require a few words of explanation. Until within about twenty years of the period of which we write, the

number of spindles it had been thought possible to work in one mule, or spinning-frame, was four hundred; and any one who should then have proposed a much larger number, would have been considered insane. But competition, and a desire of gain, will lead, or drive men to accomplish that which prudence would not otherwise have dictated, nor foresight have ventured upon. The four hundred were gradually augmented to five: the operative spinners affirming, as each additional number was added, that this must soon cease, for no man could stand the work. But the ease with which the machines were kept in motion, proved the fallacy of these assertions, and six hundred became the order of the day. It was now found that the mill-owners who had the newest and longest machines, could produce yarn at so much less cost than those who were not possessed of these advantages, that it became a matter of serious consideration with the latter, what course

they should adopt in this emergency. In an evil hour, the idea of joining two of the smaller frames together, by rods of iron carried from one to the other, and bolted firmly into each, suggested itself to the too fertile brain of some enemy to the working classes. His contrivance was found to be practicable, and was called "double decking;" one spinner performed the work of two. But a master, not satisfied with this, said, "If he can do the work of two men, why not that of three?" This end was obtained, by carrying out the same *principle*, and fixing another machine to the first one. These three spinning-wheels, now one machine, were termed "a treble decker." The management of them is allowed to be, perhaps, as hard work as the human frame can endure; and, indeed, much too toilsome to be continued with safety to health through twelve hours each day.

Such was the description of work Jack was now obliged to perform. But the

change did not cease here. When a man obtained work at Mr. Morland's mill, he was permitted to live in any cottage he chose that was at liberty, whether it belonged to his master or not. Mr. Marsh, on the other hand, rented a large number of cottages in the vicinity of his mill: these he sublet at exorbitant rents to the hands employed by him. The plan adopted to keep them tenanted was this: when a man was "shopped," a key of one of the cottages was placed in his hand, and the rent deducted each week from his wages. A key was given to Jack along with his wheel; this was only what he expected, but was surprised when his son brought one home too. He remonstrated with the manager, on the plea that his son was unmarried, and lived at home; a similar plea had been urged in many cases before, but never with success. They must pay for the two houses, but might live in either or neither, as best suited them. As no

tenant could be found to take the superfluous one, it was let for a pigsty. His master, Mr. Marsh, was a descendant of the man with whom Mr. Morland's grandfather had commenced mule spinning. When their capital increased, differences of opinion began to arise, causing disagreements, until the partners thought it most prudent to separate. Mr. Morland retained the old mill, his former partner built another in the neighbouring town. The business carried on ever since by the family had proved a profitable one; the Mr. Marsh, of whom we speak, having found himself, at the death of his father, the sole possessor of a large mill and an extensive landed estate. He was a pompous, self-opinionated man, ignorant of his trade, and quite unfit for it; his friends advised him to retire. But unsolicited advice is often thought to be impertinent, and therefore seldom acted upon. Instead of contracting his business he extended it; and being too proud to give

it his personal superintendence, it was left to servants. The consequence was, his capital underwent a gradual but steady decrease. He did not allow this to give him any serious trouble or to interfere with his pleasures, until his affairs became so much embarrassed that he must either reduce his expenditure or obtain assistance. This occurred about two years previous to the time at which Jack Houghton obtained employment at his mill. In the height of his perplexity he had condescended to consult his friend, Mr. Morland, showing him the true position of his affairs, and soliciting his advice as to the best means of extricating himself from his difficulties. To Mr. Morland's mind the remedy was simple, though perhaps it might not appear so to a man of luxurious habits, and addicted only to pleasure.

"Having voluntarily laid the state of your affairs open to me, Mr. Marsh," said he, "I shall, in the most plain manner,

tell you the course I should think it my duty to my son to follow, if placed in a similar position to that in which you now find yourself. First, then, I should devote the whole of my time and energy to business, dismiss all my superfluous servants, and see that the rest do their duty; there would then be more order and diligence, for the eye of the master is quite as essential to the obtaining of both these in a cotton mill, as that of the commander on board a man of war; and these are quite as requisite in one as the other."

"I agree with you, sir, upon that point," rejoined Mr. Marsh. "I think there could be a trifle saved by a few reforms of that nature. But it would give me no end of trouble, and be a constant source of annoyance."

"Of your capability to put up with a few trifling vexations, of course you will yourself be best able to judge; but this would be the least sacrifice I should make; for having once put my shoulder

to the wheel, I should not stop here. The interest on the mortgages might be met by a reduction of my establishment, selling horses and carriages, and letting my pleasure-grounds to the grazier. If you adopt this plan, I have not the least hesitation in saying, that in a few years your embarrassments will be remembered only as a passing cloud,—a temporary obscuration which makes the sunshine appear more bright. And the prospects of a remunerative trade, at least for a short time to come, are beginning to develop themselves; these will serve to encourage you to make the necessary exertions.”

“But my dear sir,” rejoined Mr. Marsh, “it is very easy for a man in affluent circumstances to give advice which he thinks will never fall to his lot to apply to himself. Now, even if I were inclined to adopt it, I am sure Mrs. Marsh would not consent to any diminution of her establishment. She is a woman of high

notions, and the style in which she has lived has become necessary to her very existence."

"In a transaction of such importance your own judgment should guide you; and that, too, without allowing feelings of a private nature to bias you in the least."

"But there is another question to be answered, Mr. Morland,—what would become of my daughters? Two of them have just completed their education, and are being introduced into society; whilst Ann, the youngest, is receiving her finish at Miss Cramm's boarding-school. The girls' prospects would be blighted for life, after their education has cost me nearly two thousand pounds."

"You would, I think, Mr. Marsh, more effectually secure their future happiness by acquainting them with their true position, rather than by fostering a love of affluence and grandeur, which are very likely to be snatched away before they have well tasted their sweets."

“ And then, sir, there is my son, goodness knows what Will would do without his hunters.”

Mr. Marsh thought his son “ a clever, dashing young fellow,” his sisters called him an “ aristocratic young man ;” but to his acquaintance he was known to be a good-for-nothing young scapegrace. Mr. Marsh had the inclinations of all these persons to consult, and finding the course laid out for him by his friend was one that would materially interfere with their enjoyments, he condemned it at once. “ Oh, no,” said he, “ your plan is not to be entertained for a moment ; and, in fact, I have a much better one offered for my approval.”

“ Indeed, sir.”

“ Yes,” continued Mr. Marsh ; “ I was having a little conversation about my affairs with two particular friends of mine, Manchester gentlemen, Messrs. Robbison and Steele. They very liberally proposed to take up the existing mort-

gages; and to advance me a sum of ten thousand pounds, on the security of my estate."

"Of your landed property, I presume?" said Mr. Morland.

"Exactly, sir. It is at present unencumbered, and so affords ample margin for double that amount. They also agree, if I accept their aid, to allow all the yarn I produce to pass through their hands. And as that would relieve me from the necessity of soliciting the buyers personally, it will of itself be a great inducement. How do you like their proposition, sir?"

"Like it, sir," replied his friend, "if they had possessed sufficient impudence to make such a proposal to me in my own office, I should have quickly pointed out the door to them. Why, sir, they are perfectly insatiable; there is not anything too large or too small for their accommodating maw. Their very names are become a byword in trade. They are like

a boa-constrictor, which suspends itself from the bough of a banyan tree, wishing to be thought one of the numerous trunks supporting the vast mass of foliage. There he remains till some unfortunate wretch, enticed by the cool shade, falls asleep near him; the slender trunk then moves, and commences gradually to enfold the unconscious sleeper in its deadly embrace, fascinating him by a low gentle murmur into dreams of security and happiness; until, having wrapped its slimy rings around him, the slumberer awakes too late to prevent the inevitable catastrophe. I advise you most earnestly, most sincerely, not to have anything to do with them; if you receive a shilling of their money, you will repent it to the last day of your life."

"Your statements are made in too sweeping a manner, sir," replied Mr. Marsh; "I have every confidence in the gentlemen I speak of. And even if I

had any reason to doubt their integrity, I should only have myself to blame if I allowed them to acquire undue advantages."

"Once permit these men to assist you, and you are no longer your own master."

"You are a little prejudiced against them, I think, Mr. Morland."

"I may be. But that is my advice, sir: of course you will act in the matter as you think best."

Mr. Morland perceived that his friend had determined in his own mind, previous to the interview, to accept the proposal of Messrs. Robbison and Steele; however, he still persevered in his endeavours to deter him; offering to lend him either ten thousand pounds, or more, if he wanted a larger sum. But Mr. Marsh declined it, on a plea that it might be a cause of discord between them at some future time.

A few days after this conversation he

waited upon his Manchester friends to conclude the arrangement. Mr. Robbison, the senior partner, was tall, robust, well-formed, and in the prime of life; his hair, once black, was now almost a pure white; anxiety, and the up-hill work of his earlier years, had probably effected this change; or perhaps it had been produced by the qualms of conscience; but if so, all such puerile misgivings had long disappeared. A physiognomist would have been completely at fault here: for under the bland, open smile that lit up his fine countenance, and which he rendered more deceptive by a cordial shake of the hand, was concealed intense selfishness, and a sordid love of money, almost amounting to worship. His partner, a dark complexioned man, spare, and below the middle height, was one of the genus designated by the business world as "shrewd;" the cast of his pale features betrayed at once the deep craft of the fox mingled

with the rapacity of the wolf. Totally void of sensibility for another's misery, he would, with a cool, calculating spirit, wring the last sixpence from his unfortunate victims.

Mr. Steele and his partner were both fully aware, that this address was not prepossessing; so by tacit agreement each had taken the department in the business best suited to his individual talents. Mr. Robbison threw the painted fly over the troubled waters, and allured the unwary to take the fatal bait: but no sooner was the prey fairly entangled, than the angle was placed in the more skilful and less nervous grasp of Mr. Steele; and lucky was he who escaped. Such were the personal qualities of the men to whose tender mercies Mr. Marsh was about to commit the real management of his affairs.

Mr. Steele always "happened" to be engaged whilst the preliminary arrangements were being conducted; and judg-

ing from the frank behaviour of his partner, Mr. Marsh had the simplicity to imagine he could "overreach" a gentleman of such extreme goodnature. Vain man! Seldom does the dove outwit the hawk, but more rarely was Mr. Robbison deceived by stratagems.

CHAPTER VII.

"Forget we now our state and lofty birth,—
Not titles here, but work, must prove our worth.
To labour is the lot of man below;
And when Jove gave us life, he gave us woe."

POPE'S HOMER.

NOT more than a week had elapsed after Mr. Morland's discourse with his reverend friend, before he received a communication from the Hardston union. It was signed by Mr. Hawke on behalf of the Board, and contained the notification that one of the officers of the Union would be despatched forthwith with sixty children and young persons, of both sexes. This man had received instructions to accompany them as far as Manchester; and, upon reaching that town, to place them under the charge of any person Mr. Morland should appoint to meet them. The

letter went on to state that it was the wish of the Board that some of the children should be bound for different periods, the terms of apprenticeship varying according to their ages: these indentures to be executed in the presence of their officer.

Mr. Morland's sanguine hopes of the great advantages to be obtained from his new scheme, had been somewhat damped by the well-supported arguments of his friend. He began to view it in a different light, and think that in this transaction he was not acting with his usual kindness towards his own work-people; but entering, without due deliberation, on a course which he was already half convinced was not a prudent one, and upon the moral responsibility of which he now, for the first time, seriously reflected. But he had proceeded too far to retrace his steps.

On the day fixed for the arrival of the young strangers, Hargreaves, the manager, was sent to meet them at the Manchester

terminus of the Sheffield railway, where he was joined by Frank Morland. They had not waited long before the expected train came in. The poor children were dealt with after the true workhouse fashion, being crowded together in cattle-boxes, the older females alone being so far indulged as to have one of the open carriages, formerly in use on the railway, allowed them. There were two lists of names—one specifying those children who were to remain free, the other giving the names of some, who, it was supposed, would prove the most intractable. The awkward movements and rustic appearance of most of them, as they stepped forward in answer to their respective names, was a source of much amusement to a number of idle railway porters, that flocked from all parts of the station to see them ‘drilled,’ and whose loud peals of laughter re-echoed from the lofty roof.

The first called was a little sturdy fellow, with a grin extending from ear to

ear across his sunburnt countenance. He came blundering over the platform, as if it were the first time he had ever put his foot on a boarded floor, and gave a strong tug at the lock of hair that hung over his forehead. Upon being asked if his name was Job Rowley, he gave another tug, and said, "Ize be he, zur." The next in succession was a youth about sixteen years of age; he looked extremely dull and sullen. After being twice asked if his name was Benjamin Douse, all the answer extracted from him was, "Yah!" They proceeded in this way until they came to the two last names on the list of those who were called intractable. These, Maria and Edwin St. Crost, had apparently been added since the list was made out, there being two more than the number first mentioned. The handwriting was also different, and made more remarkable, as indicating a slight tremor of the hand of the scribe. The mirth of the bystanders had by this time

become most boisterous; as, hitherto, each of the strangers had either said or done something which was considered ridiculous. But when Maria St. Crost came up, and, with her eyes bent on the ground, dropped a curtsey, though the mouths of the idlers were already opened, not a laugh was heard. This embarrassed the poor girl in a much greater degree than a noisy display of their feelings would have done. But her distress was only momentary; a shrill whistle pierced the air, giving warning that a train, the approach of which would not otherwise have been known, was about to enter the station. This unpleasant but useful signal acted like magic in dispersing the loiterers to their respective duties, one of them remarking to his companion, whilst they emptied the luggage-van,—“I say, Bill: that ere lass is a stunner, aint hoo?—hoo’s what I should caw, ‘a fust-class carriage.’” Maria now ventured to look up, but quickly averted her eyes when

she perceived the steadfast gaze which Frank Morland had fixed upon her. She was not aware that he was to be one of her future masters; and when he advanced to speak to her, a slight blush mantled her lovely countenance at the thought of having given him, though unconsciously, a cause for doing so. But his kind and gentlemanly address at once reassured her. Frank had examined the writing very minutely; it appeared extremely like that of Mr. Hawke. He said he thought there must be some mistake, the two names should have been on the other list. The officer informed him his instructions were peremptory, and he must adhere to them, and more particularly in regard to these two names than any of the others.

"There is something mysterious about this. I never saw intractability wear such an amiable dress before; and, unless you are willing that this bond should be executed," said he, addressing the

stranger, "I shall not put my signature to it."

"Indeed, sir," said the man, "I shall insist upon having them both signed."

Frank took no notice of the official, but proceeded,—“My dear girl, you may not be aware that you are about to be deprived of freedom; that, for the next two years you will be under the restraint of my father and myself, and so unable to return to your native county, even if you wished so to do.”

“I had not been informed, sir, that I was to remain here by compulsion.”

“And dare you, then, entrust your liberty with us?”

“I am willing to do so, sir.”

Maria St. Crost was nineteen years of age, and though clad in similar style with the rest of her female companions, every one present easily perceived that she had not been selected from the same class as they; for never was good-breeding contrasted in more distinct colours, with

uncouth manners. Her voice was not tainted by any vulgar or provincial accent, but was low and silvery.

Frank left the young strangers under the care of Hargreaves, having first instructed him how to proceed until he arrived at the mill, which was distant about fourteen miles. Whilst taking some refreshment, the manager informed them that the gentleman they had seen was Mr. Frank Morland. They expressed surprise at his mild behaviour, and handsome generous countenance: for they had fully expected to find, in the hated and dreaded "cotton lord," a hard, tyrannical, mean-looking man, shabbily dressed, and covered with bits of cotton-wool. Those who had come voluntarily were highly elated; and even the rest hailed it as a good omen. Little did they imagine how powerless their young master was to control even a portion of the mighty system within whose tyrannical grasp they were about to be placed. Hargreaves was contrast-

ing in his mind the marked difference in appearance between the young strangers with their clean, ruddy, sunburnt faces, and the factory operatives, pale and begrimed with soot. Not wishing, however, to damp their spirits, he did not express what he thought.

The first arrangement upon the arrival of the strangers, was to find homes for them. The younger children were apportioned out amongst the spinners, who were to take them to their houses, and treat them as any other member of their family; being repaid by the labour of the child. This was submitted to unwillingly by some of the men; for they well knew the object it was intended to effect. The young persons were to be put into the card rooms, and it was therefore necessary that lodging should be provided for them in the village. This, it was found, would be a difficult task to accomplish that evening; in the dilemma, Hargreaves, the manager's father, offered to take one

to his cottage until morning. The old man had been in the employment of the Morlands, since the evening upon which his grandmother and he had entered the valley, half a century previous. Mr. Morland had a great respect for him, not only for his being the grandson of Hargreaves, the inventor of the jenny, but also on account of his own ingenuity, and faithful, upright conduct as a servant. Nor was his master the only admirer of so praiseworthy an example of continued honesty; Mr. Wynn entered largely into the cares and pleasures of the old man, who, with his dame, about the same age as himself, lived in the neat little lodge that stood at the entrance into Mr. Morland's grounds, and which the reverend gentleman graced with his presence almost every Sunday evening, after the services of the day were completed; and frequently, when accompanied by Mrs. Wynn, would partake of Dame Hargreaves's homely tea, which was always prefaced

by many excuses for its quality. And it was by such kind attention, and conciliatory conduct as this, that Mr. Wynn had engaged for the church the affections of many of his parishioners.

With this good old pair, and at their quiet cottage, was Maria destined by Providence to find a temporary home. And in this respect was more fortunate than any of her companions; for by removing her from the temptations with which she would have been assailed, if thrown among the crowd of the village, it may, on that as well as on other accounts, be said to have had an influence over the whole tenor of her future life.

It was the modest demeanour of Maria that overcame the feelings of the old man, and caused him to take so important a step without first consulting his dame. His choice cost him many a good laugh, which the young men never found it difficult to raise at his expense; attributing the preference he had shown for her, over

her companions, entirely to beauty's attractions. All this he took in good part; and had never cause to repent of the evening's transaction. Instead of spending the remainder of the night in pettishness or weeping, as few in her novel position, and with such a gloomy prospect of the future, could have refrained from doing, Maria was collected, and even cheerful. She perceived the value of such a home; and knew that the only way by which she would be received into it was by making herself worthy of it, and gaining the esteem of those whom she might be justified in regarding as her foster parents. And in this she succeeded; for the dame remarked to her husband, when they were alone, "that lass has bin one of the gentle-folk, hoos not o' th' common sort; we'll keep her wee us, for hoo'l be a second doughter to us; and tha mun see as hoo's not put-on at th' mill." Such was the first pleasing impression the simplicity of Maria's manner had gained for her in their aged

breasts; and which time, as it rolled on, matured into a lasting affection.

The part of the mill assigned as Maria's future workroom, was that in which the cotton undergoes the process of carding and roving; the latter term is applied to that portion of the labour which prepares the material for the spinner. Nothing could exceed her astonishment when she first entered the room. Long lines of pillars supported the lofty ceiling, and sustained the massive shafts, which were revolving at a speed fearful to look at. The innumerable leather straps quivered as they flew on their ceaseless course, and appeared as if each moment about to tear the machines from the places they occupied; nor was it the eye alone that was assailed by novelty, for the ear was deafened by a Babel of confused noises, such as had never before pierced it, and caused by the different frames and engines. All these sights and sounds conspired to fill her mind with an indescribable terror. Whilst

added to this was the impure atmosphere, laden with what seemed to her eye to be dust only; but the cloud was composed of millions of the finest fibres of the cotton which fly off from the carding engines; and being almost as light as the air, are floated through the whole room. But what produced a stronger and more lasting feeling of aversion for her new occupation, was the odour that exhaled from the floors, upon which large quantities of oil are unavoidably shed. So unpleasant is this, that often years of usage cannot reconcile the inhaler to it.

Maria was placed under the tuition of an elderly female, who was to instruct her in the art of tending what is called a drawing-frame. The use of this machine is, to place alongside each other, or, as its name denotes, draw out the fibres of the cotton, which have been turned in different directions during the process of cleansing. To Maria, the skill required to tend this frame appeared a very simple

accomplishment; and being aware that she was now thrown entirely upon her own resources, she exerted herself so much, and brought her mind so earnestly to bear upon it, that in a few days she mastered it sufficiently to be reported as fit to be entrusted alone. The overlooker was surprised when informed of this; the more so, as not one of her companions, her brother excepted, had as yet been able to comprehend anything at all about the nature of their new employment.

"Yon lass," said the woman who had been her instructress, "thinks hoo can welly tent th' frame hersel' na."

"What, so soon?"

"Hi; hoo sais hoo con manish. I ne'er seed nobody as took to't as weel afore. When hoo geet a gate a knowin' a bit abate it, hoo axt au mickle o' questions. There wer' nobbat one thing as hoo didna like on."

"Well, and what might that be, Kitty?"

“Why, gracein’ hur lung white fingers wee th’ heyly waste: a, an’ bonny fingers they are too, mon; the’r moor lickert qualitie’s hons, tell belungin’ to a lass like hur. But that’s nother heer nor theer; hoo’s a graidly good watcher, an’ not a lazy booan in hur heyd.”

However kindly Maria might receive this woman’s instructions, it required all the fortitude she could command to conceal the dislike she experienced at so close a contact with her person; and, as to her language, not one-half of it could she understand; a few words in each sentence were intelligible, whilst all the rest resembled, in her ear, the uncouth sounds a Dutchman might be supposed to utter when murdering his mother tongue. She could not forbear, however, showing the disgust she felt at the manner in which the oil had to be used, her hands being frequently sullied with it; and, upon returning from the mill at night, the first thing she did was to change the dress

worn during the day, for one not impregnated with its smell.

The regulations of the mill allowed Maria few opportunities, and those of short duration, for conversing with her brother, except on Sundays; and then their leisure time was generally spent in sweet discourse, and encouraging each other to bear their present unhappy condition with patience.

Edwin's lot was more unfortunate than that his sister had to contend with; and, though only sixteen years of age, he possessed a manly loftiness of spirit that soon placed him beyond the rude jests of the other boys; but, whilst keeping him from being contaminated by their bad example, it frequently got him into trouble at the mill. The occupation he had to learn is the most unhealthy of any connected with factory labour, stripping and grinding the engines which are used for cleaning the cotton. Stripping is the term applied to the combing from the card, after a certain

lapse of time, the particles of dirt which have been collected by it; and, on each occasion that this is performed, a cloud of fibrous dust arises, which it is impossible for the operator to avoid inhaling. Grinding is the process of sharpening the cards. This part of the labour is the more deleterious of the two, and often proves serious in its consequences. For, together with the dust, there are particles of metal constantly flying off; these are the fruitful source of disease, causing asthma, and other affections of the lungs. Persons who continue in this employment, seldom attain to old age, except it be a premature one; and though for the most part young men, still there are a few whose iron constitutions enable them to continue it even beyond forty years of age. The men of this class, let their individual ages be what it may, are designated "card-room lads."

Frank Morland long remembered the scene at the railway station; though, had

it not been for the lovely and interesting stranger, it might quickly have faded from his mind. His thoughts were constantly recurring to her. And, upon going through the mill, he would frequently pause for a few moments near that part of the room where she worked. This was sure to cause an almost imperceptible colour to tinge her fair cheeks; for the attention of her young master, slight as it was, did not escape the jealous and ever-watchful eyes of her fellow-workers. And when the manager left the room, her ear would be assailed by some obscene remark, or ribald jest; and although happy in not understanding the meaning of the words, she was perfectly conscious of the cause of them, and also of their being directed especially against herself.

Ever since the arrival of the youthful rustics, Frank had taken a peculiar interest in their welfare. He occasionally visited the houses where they were placed, ascer-

taining from their own lips the treatment they received from their foster parents. These visits of inspection, as they may be termed, brought him into frequent contact with the young people.

With Maria St. Crost, Frank became the more pleased each time he saw her. Her natural ability soon marked her out as the one most fit to act in the capacity of superintendent over the younger portion of the strangers, and to whom he might communicate his wishes regarding them. The pleasure he felt in thus lightening the grief of these poor creatures was, doubtless, heightened by its being the means of affording him frequent opportunities for a few moments' conversation with Maria. Seldom did these interviews occur except in the presence of others; but when such was not the case, then it was that the nobleness of her character best discovered itself. Never for a single moment did she forget her true position, or once deviate from a line of

conduct which, had there been no other cause of admiration in her, would of itself have attracted Frank's attention. Twice or thrice he had called at the lodge. But Maria's manner showed plainly that this was not pleasing to her; he therefore refrained from doing so, except in company with Mr. Wynn; and when they now met in private, it was by accident, which had not always been the case, as far as Frank was concerned.

CHAPTER VIII.

“And hopes, and fears that kindle hope,
An undistinguishable throng,
And gentle wishes long subdued—
Subdued and cherished long.

“She wept with pity and delight,
She blushed with love and virgin shame;
And like the murmur of a dream,
I heard her breathe my name.”

COLERIDGE.

THE prospects for English commerce had been gradually assuming a darker aspect since the commencement of 1846; and, towards the close of that year, it became quite apparent to all engaged in trade, that a storm was at hand which, judging from the portentous indications of the gloomy and unusual depression, threatened to be one of unwonted violence. For, as the thunder-cloud, after a few weeks of brilliant weather, hovers around some fair

scene, subduing both man and beast by its oppressive influence, and, finally, discharging its contents on the ripening harvest, sweeps away the crops, tears up in its rapid course the noble forest trees that have weathered a hundred gales, and in a few moments spreads ruin and desolation throughout the valley, so was it in the commercial crisis now approaching. A sufficient warning had been given since the wild excitement of the previous year; a warning that might have induced all prudent men to contract their operations, and cease to speculate in the face of such disastrous accounts as those that were now constantly pouring in from all parts of the world.

But the fever still raged, nor was it finally stopped before the great crash took place in the September of 1847, for during that month were blotted from the list of merchants and tradesmen, names that had for generations been synonymous with boundless wealth. This embarrassed

the operations of capital, and consequently curtailed the demand for the labour of the artisan, the loss of which, to him, cannot be compensated, constituting, as it does, the sole source of both his comforts and necessities.

A large proportion of Mr. Morland's production was what is termed "India cloths." These goods he shipped on his own account, having an agent both at Calcutta and Bombay. For many months the sales reported amounted to not more than half the quantity shipped. Every mail took out orders to clear off the goods, but still the sales continued as small as ever. Mr. Morland began to get alarmed about the way in which his agents were proceeding; their conduct being so opposite to his reiterated wishes. He pacified himself for some time by thinking, that as his agents were on the spot, they might be acquainted with circumstances justifying them in the course they were adopting. But these flattering assurances soon gave

way to doubts when he reflected, that when, during twenty years' experience of the India trade, his judgments had differed from those of his agents, his own opinion had almost invariably proved the more correct in the end.

Frank shared in the anxiety of his father; and as the dilemma in which they were placed was only increased by each month's delay, he suggested the propriety of his proceeding to India, and avowed his willingness and even wished to do so. This was at the commencement of the year 1847.

Nothing could have been more pleasing to Mr. Morland than his son's proposal; for he well knew that his personal superintendence would soon place matters in a right position: and though most of his time would be occupied with business, still he would have much left that might be devoted to travelling; than which nothing tends more to improve an already cultivated mind. He agreed with the philoso-

pher when he remarked, that "no one should travel to learn without having first learned to travel." But there was another reason for Mr. Morland's being favourable to Frank's absence for a short period from the country: he had been a silent, but watchful observer of Mrs. Marsh, who for some time had employed all her art to engage Frank's affections for Ann, her youngest daughter.

It is a very rare occurrence that all the children of a family are equally endowed with personal charms. One or two of its members monopolize the beauty of the whole, and, like diamonds, when mixed with less costly gems, appear to sparkle only the more brilliantly through the contrast. Mrs. Marsh's daughters were not an exception to this almost general rule: for whilst Ann, the youngest of the three girls, was the favoured one, her sisters were decidedly plain. Ann was acknowledged by all to be the belle of the town; even the fairest of her own sex were com-

pelled to allow her the palm. Her gracefulness of figure charmed every beholder; whilst a profusion of rich brown curls gave her countenance a loveliness that would have rendered it perfectly enchanting had not the self-satisfied smile of conscious beauty warned the almost fascinated gazer to beware.

The girls had been educated in such a style as to make them what is termed, "highly accomplished" young ladies: music, dancing, or the last novel, being considered by them as the most important necessities of life. Ann had always some new piece of music on which she wanted Frank's opinion; "his taste was so much better than her sisters'. Upon these and like occasions the proud smile would be changed for one more pleasing. And though Frank ever addressed her with that courtesy which females, especially the handsome ones, always receive from the well bred; still, at the same time, as he imagined, without going be-

yond the cold bounds of civility. No opportunity was neglected by Mrs. Marsh to bring the young people together. But as Frank abhorred pride or affectation, which he soon found to predominate in the dispositions both of Ann and her mamma, he never allowed his politeness to ripen into affection. The knowledge of his son's good sense might have spared Mr. Morland the anxiety he felt on the young man's account.

A few days previous to his departure from England, Frank called to take leave of the family, who, until then, were not aware that he was about to leave them. This inattention at once convinced Mrs. Marsh that all her plans had been of no avail; whilst Ann, assuming one of her proudest looks, remarked, "that she thought India a good school for young men to practise politeness in, as they could do so there without endangering the hearts of the ladies; for there they had seen sufficient of the world to be

aware what such attentions are worth." She then sailed from the room, without deigning to look towards, or even bidding farewell to the wanderer.

Frank had sufficient command over himself not to appear conscious that any retort had been intended by his fair preceptor; but protracted his visit a longer time than he otherwise would have done, in order that he might show his perfect indifference to her conduct. Presents of shawls, fans, and many other female ornaments were bespoken by the ladies. "But we must not forget Ann," said her mamma, "for I am sure anything Mr. Frank may choose to bring will be highly prized by her." Frank only smiled assent, making no remark.

The family were highly indignant at what they considered his slight in not informing them, until the last moment, of his departure. Young Marsh said "he was a 'muff:' and for his part he was dem'd glad he had left the town!" The

young men had never been associates, though acquainted with each other from infancy: business occasionally brought them in contact; but their amusements being of a completely dissimilar character, nothing beyond a mere acquaintanceship had ever subsisted between them. Young Marsh had no taste for any refined pastime; and as for study, it possessed no attractions for him: he boasted of not having read a book through since leaving school. For even light works, or those on field sports, contained some chapters void of interest, except to a well-informed mind, or a true sportsman. His evenings were spent in the bar of a singing-room, at one of the second-rate inns. And having always plenty of money to squander, he was, of course, received with favour, not only by the landlord, but also by the neatly dressed bar-maids, who treated him with an attention he never met elsewhere.

The report that Frank was going

abroad soon spread through Mr. Morland's mills, where he was a general favourite. For as he looked upon the work-people as freemen and not serfs, so, he would not allow the discipline of the mill to be rendered needlessly stringent or irksome. As the strangers from Suffolk had been taken under his especial care, they could full well imagine that with his departure their position would not be improved. And, indeed, the universal regret, and wishes for his happiness were expressed in a manner more warm and sincere than the blunted feelings of the Lancashire factory operatives usually incite them to display.

His departure from England was fixed, by the sailing of the steamer, to take place on the 15th of March. And as he stood, for the last time, surrounded with the busy scene of a cotton-mill, his eye wandered through the maze of machinery, until, as if irresistibly attracted, it rested upon that part of the room in which

Maria St. Crost was at work. Frank gazed upon her graceful form, which displayed, from the neat simplicity of her dress, perfect symmetry unadorned by art. This was on Saturday, on the Sunday evening he walked from church with Mr. Wynn, who, according to his usual custom, called at the lodge. Frank was embarrassed, and hesitated a few moments before he entered. "The old couple will take it to heart," thought he, "if I go without saying 'goodby,' so I will just step in and see them."

He felt relieved, but at the same time disappointed, when they found the old people alone. After remaining a short time, Frank left his reverend friend, and was retiring unaccompanied by any one, when his further progress was arrested by perceiving, through the half-open door of a small room, the window of which looked out upon the park, Maria seated reading. His recent determination, for, as we have seen, he had resolved in his own mind to

shun a private interview with the lovely stranger, had been dictated by prudence, and so long as the temptation was not offered, seemed easy to be adhered to. But he had forgotten the frailty of human nature; for no sooner was it in his power to gratify this once most ardent wish, than all his former resolutions vanished, like a passing thought from his mind. He entered, and so changed the future fate of both.

Maria heard some one approach, but supposing it to be the old dame, did not lift her eyes from her Bible until, when she did so, they met the earnest gaze of Frank, as he leant over her. Blushing, she rose, curtsied, and was about to retire, when Frank, taking her by the hand, led her back.

About an hour afterwards Mr. Wynn took his leave. He was surprised, whilst letting himself out, to find his young friend still at the lodge; but his astonishment increased tenfold upon per-

ceiving Maria—whose hand Frank held, a half-willing, half-reluctant captive, in his own—seated by his side. This sight, so unexpected, and so suddenly presented, caused the reverend gentleman to draw back in such haste that he stumbled; and so made the young people aware of his presence. Frank was about to enter into an explanation, but before he could speak, the outer door closed. The last words he addressed to his agitated companion were—"Farewell, Maria, and may God guard you in the midst of the wickedness that surrounds you. If it be his will that I return safe to my native land, my first act shall be to make my dearest girl my bride." He sealed the contract, unresisted, upon her lips; and snatching up his hat, followed Mr. Wynn, expecting to overtake him before he arrived at the Parsonage, but that gentleman having walked quickly forward, was nowhere to be seen along the winding carriage drive leading in that direction.

Frank could easily picture to himself the state of mind in which his friend would be; and wishing both to remove his suspicion and ask his counsel, he resolved to wait upon him that evening.

The Parsonage, situated within Mr. Morland's domain, had formerly, in the days of Squire Houghton, been the huntsman's lodge; and though the cottage formed a portion of the present building, it was now considerably altered. It stood on a sloping bank, which, together with the opposite hill-side, was diversified with some fine trees,—the few remains of the noble forest that once flourished there; and visible at intervals through the glade, was an artificial sheet of water extending to the hall. The view from the latticed windows was not one which could be strictly termed "a Lancashire scene," for there were no tall chimneys visible; these sooty columns being hidden by the surrounding hills. But still there were indications of the vicinity of a

manufacturing town. The trunks of the trees, instead of pleasing the eye by the variegated tints of their bark, all wore the same sombre hue; and towards the close of summer the foliage assumed a like appearance, as if mourning its approaching and premature fall; for autumn here strews the ground with leaves much earlier than in an unpolluted atmosphere; whilst upon plucking a rose, the finger of the fair florist, if not pierced by the thorn, would be marked by a stain that might, perhaps, more surely betray the theft. The cottage had once been hidden amongst luxuriant honeysuckle and jessamine, but these were now replaced by ivy and a few climbing roses, trained with great care, hung over the small lattice-work porch.

Frank found Mr. Wynn pacing up and down a short avenue of beech trees that were near the cottage. His countenance wore an expression of pity and distress, which darkened into a deep frown as the

young man approached to meet him; but, nothing daunted, he addressed the reverend gentleman in his usual open manner.

“My dear sir,” he commenced, “I was conscious that my conduct this evening would require an explanation, and am sure that you—”

“Why explain to me, sir?” said Mr. Wynn, interrupting him; “go explain to God, if your conscience will allow you even for an instant to imagine it possible to justify yourself. Little did I think that my young pupil, taught from infancy, and guarded with almost a parent’s fond solicitude, would, like some loose libertine, merely to obtain an hour’s amusement, be the instrument chosen to awaken me from my day-dream; for all now appears to have been only a pleasing delusion.”

“Indeed, my dear friend,” exclaimed Frank, “you unwittingly do me an injustice.”

“I would to God I did. You may

call it injustice, or give it whatever name you please, sir; but in a single night you have destroyed the labour and sullied the recollections of many happy years: years spent in assisting and watching the gradual development of a mind which, I vainly thought, would prove generous, open, and above all, virtuous."

Frank endeavoured to speak; the reverend gentleman, however, was so overcome by sorrow that he did not observe the interruption, but continued speaking in the same solemn tone.

"And old as I am, sir, I confess I was so confiding as to believe that I had at last met, in the humble ranks of life, with a being innocent as she was lovely; one who was shunning the temptations that surrounded her, and listening with a willing ear to all my counsels."

Frank's whole frame thrilled with pleasure to hear Maria's praise from the lips of Mr. Wynn, flowing, as it did, from his heart. He had for some time evinced a

feeling of regard for her; this he never ventured to allow himself to call love. Nor had his passion deserved the almost sacred appellation until that evening. When he bade her farewell he loved her, he now almost adored her. And, taking the good old man by the hand, he said, with an earnestness that at once arrested his attention:—

“And worthy, doubly worthy is she of all the care, all the anxiety you have bestowed, or that I am sure you will in future bestow upon her; she is the innocent, the pure being you thought her.”

“Your words are indeed sweet to me,” said the reverend gentleman; “would your actions belied them not. But they are irreconcilable. You pollute the spring, and then come and say, ‘Go, draw pure water as before.’”

“I ask but a few moments’ hearing, Mr. Wynn. I will not detain you long, for I shall soon convince you that Maria will now be indeed a daughter to you; and

that all of blame, if blame there be, in this night's actions, rests with myself alone."

"Proceed, sir," said Mr. Wynn, when Frank paused for his reply. "I will listen to your story; but I cannot see how you will clear your conduct from guilt so apparent."

Thus emboldened, Frank commenced his story.

"It is now many months ago since my attention was first attracted by the brilliant beauty of a young lady, the daughter of Mr. Marsh, my father's friend. This intimacy frequently brought the young lady and myself together; but I soon discovered that beauty alone, without some other attendant grace, could not realize the day-dreams I had been indulging in. For I had pictured to myself, as the being I could love, one to whom pride and all its concomitant evils were unknown, or looked upon as the fallacies, and not the accomplishments, of life. But

with sentiments such as these I found Ann's mind had not been imbued, and our friendship progressed not beyond the cold bounds of common civility. This was just about the time when Maria and her companions arrived. I was prepossessed with the lovely stranger the moment I saw and heard her speak. Something there was in her manner that arrested my attention; and not mine alone, but all who were present were captivated by her gentleness; and day after day, as I marked her behaviour, her modest deportment convinced me, as plainly as language could have done, that she had not always been the child of want, or nurtured in the rough school of poverty. It only remained to prove, whether so much grace and loveliness was characterised by an equal share of virtue and modesty; and I became, from day to day, more fully confirmed in the opinion I had first formed of her. I then availed myself of any opportunity that

was presented to converse with her. But when, upon one occasion, I mentioned the subject of her former life, and endeavoured to elicit something relating to it, it appeared to give her so much distress, that I desisted from any further attempts to learn her previous history; nor would she afterwards allow me any opportunity for doing so. I perceived, likewise, that my attention only made her the more unhappy, by drawing down upon her the unpleasant remarks of the hands. Not until this evening have I been able to make known to her the deep interest I took in her welfare. As we discoursed on various subjects, the modesty and good sense she exhibited overcame every other consideration, and I avowed my love. She made use of every persuasion she could think of to divert my passion; a noble self-sacrifice that only increased my admiration of her whole conduct. My father's anger, and the displeasure of friends, she painted in terms both earnest

and sincere. But, having love for my ally, I overruled every objection, and Maria has promised to be my bride?"

"Am I to understand, sir," said Mr. Wynn, "that the proposals you made were of an honourable nature, made after due reflection, or only on the impulse of the moment? I am afraid you have both been too hasty: you in soliciting, she, as the weaker, in consenting."

"My intentions most assuredly were perfectly honourable. I had previously reflected upon all the numerous objections to an union of this description; and as there were many of them contrary to what the world calls 'prudence,' I did for some time struggle against the nobler course I have now taken. The mere possession of wealth, I discovered, was not sufficient to constitute happiness. But the only way in which I overcame Maria's scruples was, by promising never to marry without my father's consent, nor to break the subject to him until my return to

England. 'For never,' said she, 'shall Mr. Morland reproach me with having gained, in a clandestine manner, the hand of his son.'"

"The noble minded girl."

"If my father knew her worth, her amiability of temper, and her good breeding, I am certain he could not, he would not for one moment object to the choice I have made."

"I am much afraid, my dear boy, he will never view the affair in the same light that you now do. His ideas of refinement, consequent upon his education, would revolt at the very thought of admitting into his hall a mere factory girl, for such he will naturally suppose Maria to be; and that, too, as the wife of his son. Many unlooked for occurrences will happen during your absence, that may effect a change, either in your position or views, and therefore I think it advisable that no mention should be made of the subject at present, as it would only in-

crease Mr. Morland's perplexity of mind, without advancing your cause."

"I shall be guided, Mr. Wynn, entirely by your counsel," replied Frank; "but never, under any change of circumstances, may my father restrain me in this affair. I have only one request to make, sir, with which I am sure you will comply."

"I shall not refuse you anything, Frank, which I can grant consistently with my duty."

"Maria, as I said, would not disclose anything which threw a light upon her history," continued Frank, "except that she was an orphan; I wish you to be a father to her. And oh, my dear sir, for God's sake, for my sake, guard her through the temptations with which she will be surrounded, probably for a longer time than we now think of, she having resolutely refused to leave the mill until my return."

"In complying with your request," said the reverend gentleman, "I shall

only be performing my duty,—a duty the most pleasing that ever fell to the lot of man to achieve. I shall watch over her as I should over a daughter, for now is she dearer to me than before.”

“I can only thank you, Mr. Wynn, for the kind assurance you have given me; for sooner should everything at stake in India have perished, rather than I would have left one so young, so lovely, friendless. But now I go in the full confidence that I have found a protector, who will guard the treasure more valuable to me than all the wealth my father can give.”

“You may, perhaps, suppose, my young friend, that the present time is not one I ought to have chosen for making a few remarks I am about to do; but knowing from experience, that the strongest of human passions, softened by time, gradually fade away, leaving only the remembrance of their once impetuous heat, I think it better to caution you. In India you will be placed amongst the society of

highly polished and cultivated people, who, in their intercourse with each other, mix more freely than they would in their native land; and when your gay and fascinating countrywomen are captivating all around them by their bland and lady-like manners; when the eye is in danger of entangling the heart in snares, which its better judgment would condemn as foolish or imprudent, and so allows too frequently a momentary impulse to obtain a victory over the nobler emotions of the mind, and obliterate, until too late, the recollections of a former engagement; then, in that hour of temptation, you must look back to this interview, and remember that a heart beats in your native land, living for you, and you alone, clothed in a form as lovely as fancy can conceive, or fond lover picture; and that upon your future conduct depends the happiness or misery of a being innocent and confiding. This warning, I hope, will never be required; but, if it should,

I shall trust to your honour; and so God bless you, my dear boy; good night, good night."

After giving Frank a hearty shake of the hand, the reverend gentleman walked with a quick step towards the house to conceal his excited feelings.

Mr. Wynn did not disapprove of Frank's having formed an attachment to his young favourite, now that he believed it to be honourable; and hoped, for the sake of both, that it would prove a lasting one. It would be the means of guarding him through many temptations; whilst the pleasing anticipations of their reunion would assist in cheering Maria during the year in which, by her own choice, she was to continue in the mill.

CHAPTER IX.

“Upon the Exchange, 'twixt twelve and one,
Meets many a neat entangler :
Most merchant mén, not one in ten,
But is a cunning angler ;
And (like the fishes in the brook)
Brother doth fish for brother.
A golden bait hangs at the hook,
And they fish for one another.”

OLD BALLAD.

THE stagnation in trade which began to manifest itself towards the close of the year 1846, was not confined to any particular branch of it; but an universal gloom overspread every department of labour, until the springs of industry throughout the kingdom seemed to be drying up, as if exhausted by the unusually abundant supplies they had lately afforded.

The cotton manufactories throughout the country had been in a more flourish-

ing state during the two previous years than at any period, with one single exception, for a long space of time. This extraordinary prosperity had given an impetus to the trade, stimulating every millowner to spin as much yarn, and weave as much cloth, as it was possible for human hands, aided by machinery, to produce, until their united production had increased to an extent almost incredible, and certainly without parallel in the history of the trade. In the meantime, people closed their eyes to the future; being for a time, as it were, intentionally blind to the awful consequences that were inevitably to follow; and, like rash or unskilful seamen, who, though their ship has "bumped," giving sure and unmistakeable warning that danger is at hand, still crowd sail upon sail, until at last the proud vessel strikes the treacherous rock, which stands in the ocean a lasting monument of their folly.

The manufacturers, borne away by the excitement, and having a too great longing for gain, continued their operations on the same gigantic scale, long after their better judgment, guarded by experience, should have caused them to act with extreme caution. They thought, or tried to think that the lull would only be temporary; would soon be followed by a brisker demand for goods than ever. The consequence was, the stocks of yarn and cloth, made when the raw material and labour were at their highest value, rapidly accumulated. Few and fortunate were they whose warehouses remained empty.

Messrs. Robbison and Steele had the baneful results of former panics too vividly impressed on their memories, and too legible on their balance sheets, to allow themselves to be caught napping.

It was on a cold wet day, in the January of 1847, that the partners were seated at opposite sides of a small ma-

hogany table in their private office. The walls of the room were papered in imitation of panelled oak, and decorated with a map of the United States of America and a plan of Manchester: the cheerful fire in the stove gave an air of comfort to the apartment, that contrasted strikingly with the atmosphere of the narrow court, into which the window of the office looked, where the drops of rain appear almost poised by the density of the smoke; and as the weather in every place has an influence over the spirits of men, but nowhere in a greater degree than in Manchester, so it now added a dismal melancholy to every countenance. The unconcerned passer along the street, as well as the merchant in his office, felt its operation.

Mr. Steele was reading the trade article from the *Manchester Guardian* of that day, Wednesday; a bitter smile passed over his features as he replaced the newspaper on the table. "There," said he,

"that is just the sort of report I expected to see of yesterday's market. Both cloth and yarns are coming tumbling down."

"There appeared rather more firmness, though," remarked his partner; "they talked of a better feeling too on Change."

"So did I, Mr. Robbison, till I had sold those ten thousand bundles of Marsh's. What d—d rubbish that yarn is, but it will do for India though. They were bought without sample by old Raisth-wind. I heard he'd been offering part of 'em afterwards at an eighth less. He will break, will that fellow, before long. If he hasn't the cash at the end of his fourteen days I shall fire into him. That yarn will be worth considerably less in another fortnight; and there will be no occasion to return the sale for this month, so that we shall have something more than commission on it."

"I think you had better take Mr. Marsh's affairs into your own hands now, Mr. Steele, had you not? What say you?"

“I’ve been thinking about the same thing myself. If we was to go on the same tack much longer he’d soon slip through our fingers. Indeed, I should not be surprised if he was to talk about paying off that last mortgage; for it was left open as to time, if you remember.”

“Well, sir, you shall have him to yourself. You can then squeeze him as hard as you choose.”

“Trust me for that, Mr. Robbison. I intend to sweat him properly. He shan’t have a d—d farthing in twelve months: nor would he have had now if you’d stuck to him properly.”

“Why, to tell you the truth, I did not wish to go quite so fast: we are sure to have all in the end. And then there was a match talked of between young Morland and one of Marsh’s daughters, which we should have spoiled: but he is going out to India; so there is an end of that.”

“And if he had married one of ’em, what then? What benefit should we

have got by it, I should like to know? It would have been up with us as far as Marsh's business goes; Henry Morland would soon have paid us off; for what's a few paltry thousands to him when there is two hundred thousand, to my knowledge, to back 'em with; it was him that offered to lend Marsh money when we got hold of him. But, I say, Robbison, how is it you're getting so d—d squeamish now-a-days? There's no more harm in killing the hare than in trapping him with the intention of letting some one else do it. You'll not object to share the skin, I'll be bound."

Mr. Steele had observed the increasing dislike manifested by his partner of late to what he termed "sweating;" but abstained from mentioning his suspicions until a good opportunity offered itself. He, therefore, resolved to treat Mr. Marsh with great severity: not to gratify his cupidity alone, but also to chagrin Mr. Robbison, who had been the means of

placing him in his power. To do the business more expeditiously, or, as he jocularly remarked, "that he might the more effectually drain the Marsh," he intimated to that gentleman, that it was their intention for the future to supply him with cotton themselves; as the numerous connexions they had among the Liverpool merchants, would enable them to purchase it to much greater advantage than he could.

This compulsory arrangement, for proposal it cannot be called, at once removed the mask from the proceedings of those whom Mr. Marsh had termed his friends; he was now convinced of their intention to reduce him to beggary, and then cast him off; but still he wanted the courage to resist, or was so reckless as to trust to the mere chances of fortune.

The legitimate profits on manufactures had either entirely disappeared, or were so fast dwindling away, that the margin

between gain and loss became every day less discernible. This was the time Mr. Steele thought to be a good opportunity for commencing his new course of proceedings towards involving Mr. Marsh's estate to the extent of what he supposed was its present value. This process, if conducted in the way his partner had hitherto been dealing with him, would be a tedious one; and might have protracted the crisis for years. But Mr. Steele's notion of a clever business transaction, did not at all coincide with this. "In such an affair," said he, "we must consider that everything Mr. Marsh has, or may have, belongs to us; for it will be ours, and that is almost the same thing. And as there is no chance of his making anything more for some time to come, the sooner we lay hold of what there is, the better it will be for us."

A confidential man, named Luke Sharp, was accordingly, forthwith, despatched to take the management of the mill. This

Sharp was a creature of Mr. Steele's; an insolent, overbearing fellow; ignorant of everything that related to the proper conducting of a cotton-mill; and one who cared nothing for the welfare of those who were so unfortunate as to be under his control. The abatements were made without discrimination; a fixed sum must be abstracted each pay-day from the wages of the hands; whether there had been any neglect on their part, or not, the result was the same. Mr. Marsh's establishment was never what is termed "a good shop;" but now the workpeople wished for old times again.

There was no portion of Mr. Marsh's property, except his landed estate, that was not too heavily encumbered already. Mr. Steele was aware of the ample margin that still remained for a further mortgage on the park and mansion, and this made him the more eager to embarrass his victim. But he, Mr. Marsh, knowing that bankruptcy would come either sooner or

later, resolved, if possible, to save something from the general wreck. For this purpose he explained his affairs to Mr. Morland so far, as to lead that gentleman to think him solvent at the time. He, therefore, willingly consented to lend him three thousand pounds, to be made over to his daughters, and invested in their names. The mortgage deed, drawn up under the superintendence of Mr. Kenworthy, Mr. Morland's legal adviser, was executed without delay.

The proceedings in parliament during 1847, were watched with great interest by the factory operatives throughout the whole of the kingdom. Their darling Ten Hours Bill, it was supposed, would be passed before the end of the sessions, and crown with success the many years of persevering exertions which they had made to obtain it. Mr. Steele was violently opposed to the provisions of the Bill. "There is nothing but lies and cant talked in its favour," he would say;

“for why should the rights of labour be interfered with, and the free development of capital and enterprise be stopped by such a pack of humbugs? I always return them a Pharaoh’s answer—‘Ye are idle—ye are idle.’” But his was not a mere passive opposition; he made the most strenuous exertions to collect counter evidence—facts, as he styled them—contradictory to the statements brought forward by supporters of the measure.

A petition to parliament purporting to have emanated from the operatives themselves, and to which the names of all employed in Mr. Marsh’s establishment were appended, was placed in the hands of a member noted for his devotion to the science of political economy, and by him presented to the House of Commons. This gentleman’s views entirely coincided with the prayer of the petition he had placed on the table of the House:—“That the legislature should not impose any further restrictions on factory labour.”

He had no practical knowledge of the real position of the factory operatives; but what he observed at Mr. Marsh's mill, during a recent visit, had confirmed his original impression, that the agitation for a Ten Hours Bill was regarded by the mass of the people with perfect indifference.

The day previous to that on which the honourable gentleman had paid a visit to the mills, Sharp had received instructions from Mr. Steele to have it made presentable. The speed of the engine was to be slackened, diminishing in an equal ratio that of the machinery, and thus lightening the labour of the workers, who were to be dressed in their neatest attire, and some of them reading or sewing; for though this is contrary to all the rules of mill discipline, still it would tell, and leave a pleasing impression upon the mind of a stranger, who thus "unexpectedly" popped in upon them.

The honourable member was quite

charmed with the happiness and contentment he saw around him. The young women were extremely neat and clean; many of them looked interesting, whilst some were decidedly pretty. The pale countenances and hollow cheeks he had prepared himself to meet with, were nowhere visible, or if seen, were not so very remarkable; the most sickly in appearance happened, accidentally of course, to be in the manager's cabin, or some private room out of the way. Two or three of the most prudent of the hands were called up and asked a few questions, as to whether they were satisfied with the law as it was, or wished for shorter hours of labour. The answers returned were, "yes," or "no," according to the nod or shake of Sharp's head, who stood behind the honourable gentleman, and gave the bias to the replies. But the whole plot was very nearly being discovered through the waywardness, or rather too great honesty, of one little fellow, who would

say what he thought. "He wanted more time for play; he was not satisfied with getting home at eight o'clock, and then going straight away to bed, so that he might be at it again at five in the morning."

"You must be an incorrigible young rogue, sir," said his interrogator; "why there are thousands of lads of your age in the streets of London, who would willingly give up their play, and work as hard as you, if it were only to wear such good clothes as these."

"Ah mon, yo should a seen thoos ha have on up'ot tuther days; air Moll fot these fro'th' popshop; for th' Bash had toud us aw as we mut put—"

He would have expatiated still further upon the reason why his old suit had been discarded for the day, if Mr. Steele had not interposed and sent the lad to his work; remarking to his honourable friend, who understood very little of what the lad had said—"That it appeared he

had still better clothes on yesterday, but his mother, for some reason or other, had not allowed him to put them on that day."

"A kind, motherly woman I have no doubt," was the rejoinder. "What a plague her son must be to her."

The cottages of the workpeople were next inspected. If a stranger had passed Lazy Row, for so it was called, a day or two before this visit took place, he would have remarked that the name was any thing but appropriate. Never within the memory of the most frequent passer had it exhibited such a picture of female industry. The floors of the rooms had been well cleaned, and the furniture scrubbed and rubbed, probably for the first time; for it was well known that more sand and soap had been consumed on that day, than any previous one since the row was first inhabited. Be that as it may, all was clean and orderly; whilst the savoury odours emitted by the bacon,

and other things preparing for the mid-day meal, were so inviting, that the honourable gentleman partook of a rasher off a polished pewter dish; this afforded no small amusement to the lookers on, who were in the secret.

It was these "facts," not brought forward as mere statements, but from his own ocular proof, that the honourable gentleman, from his place in the House, startled his fellow-legislators and the country with one of the most eloquent and convincing speeches delivered in opposition to the Ten Hours Bill.

The measures resorted to by Mr. Steele soon began to embarrass his victim, Mr. Marsh, who found it necessary to obtain a further advance of money. The interview he solicited for this purpose took place at the private office of Messrs. Robbison and Steele. Nothing could exceed the polite manner in which the junior partner of the firm received Mr. Marsh, for he had been informed by letter of the

purport of the visit. After many kind inquiries as to the health of Mrs. Marsh and her daughters, business was proceeded with.

"We have received your letter," said Mr. Steele, "and shall be glad to accommodate you with a small sum. Me and my partner was saying, only the other day, we wished we had some good investment for a little matter we have to spare."

"What I want at present," said Mr. Marsh, "is so little, that I might draw upon the stock for a few hundreds—a thousand or so."

"I think, sir, you will not have much to draw upon there."

"You forget the two thousand bundles, Mr. Steele,—those we sent in the other day."

"You shall see how we stand, sir. Here, William," said he, addressing one of the clerks, "bring Mr. Marsh's book."

"The account, it appears," continued Mr. Steele, "had run bad through interest

and commission, and one thing or another, very considerably, and is overdrawn even after the last delivery has been included. Now, a business man like you, that has been on 'Change all your life, must know that, with a panic such as there is now, we should not be doing justice to ourselves if we was not covered with yarn. Our bad debts will be enormous this year; nobody on 'Change knows who's who now. There were three shipping houses stopped yesterday. None stood higher than Zbeqckumezy and Co. I should have thought myself very lucky in getting an order for a few bales from them on Saturday: on Tuesday they stopped for four hundred and fifty thousand pounds. Now with a guaranteed commission in such a risky trade as this, you cannot but admit that we have been very lenient—very! The extreme pressure may only last a few months, or even weeks."

"But, in the meantime, we must have wages from some source or other."

“To be sure you must; for low as you have 'em, they'll not work for nothing yet, Mr. Marsh,—eh, will they? Well, I see no other plan but one. Mr. Robbison informs me that a few thousands may be lent on the land. Now, I don't like to run mortgages too fine, but, in a case of this nature, we must do things that we otherwise should not think of. This need only be a temporary arrangement, for I dare say it will go against the grain with you to encumber the estate.”

“If you are willing to advance a further sum upon that security,” said Mr. Marsh, “I have no objections to raise against it. Are you aware, though, of the incumbrance already upon it?”

“Yes; and it is only the esteem in which we hold you that induces us to make such an offer. Ten thousand pounds is a large sum to lend upon so small an estate as yours; but it may be valuable for building land some time or another, for it lies near the town; and then there is a little timber on it too.”

"But your mortgage, sir, is not all."

"Not all! How is that?—what else is there?"

"Mr. Morland has a second one for three thousand pounds."

"Mr. Morland! And what the d—l right had—that is, a—I meant to say, it would have been as well if you had consulted us before taking this step."

Mr. Steele was losing his temper; for great indeed was his vexation upon hearing this unlooked-for announcement. What would his partner think about it? To be so soon overreached—fairly rooked in the month,—and that, too, by a man like Mr. Marsh. Such a thing had never before occurred during the whole of his career. Mr. Robbison must not be made acquainted with the circumstance at present, but a further sum advanced, and the plans for the final crisis matured as soon as possible.

One of the stipulations was, that a portion of the money should be laid out in repairing the machinery; and another

that a notice should appear in one of the newspapers, stating that the buildings, machinery, and other effects, were the property of Messrs. Robbison and Steele. This was drawn up in a legal form, so that any one doing business in future with Mr. Marsh would only have his personal security in the transaction.

This hurt his pride more than anything which had yet taken place, for it showed the world how poor he was; nor could he any longer conceal the state of his affairs from his wife.

Mrs. Marsh received the communication with greater coolness than her husband expected. She thought he had needlessly wounded her feelings by drawing too gloomy a picture of his situation. His friends would come forward and assist him,—she was sure the embarrassment would only be temporary. It was ridiculous to alarm the girls by informing them; and nothing could be more absurd than to think of curtailing the establish-

ment, just at the very moment when she expected that Captain Simpledon was about to propose to Ann,—business must never be mentioned at home. So business was not mentioned, and things continued to wear the same aspect as heretofore. Mrs. Marsh's entertainments were as frequent and as sumptuous as ever.

CHAPTER X.

"But not their joys alone thus coarsely flow ;
Their morals, like their pleasures, are but low."
GOLDSMITH.

LET us now follow Jack Houghton, and observe how fortune has been dealing out her good or evil destinies for him and his family. The change in the worldly circumstances of the father was soon followed by one, equally deplorable, in the moral characters of his children. The two oldest girls were now removed from the vigilant care and watchful eye of their late pastor; and being thrown amid temptations, more numerous in the town than those by which they were assailed whilst living in the country, their virtues speedily gave way, obliterating every

trace for the present of the reverend gentleman's teaching.

Neither of the sisters could be considered pretty, or even interesting; but were good-humoured girls, with a word for every one, and always a ready retort or merry laugh, which made them universal favourites, not only with their female companions, but also with the young men, who delighted in having "a bit of jaw," as they termed it, with the sisters. They were often supposed by strangers to be twins, from the great resemblance they bore to each other in stature, dress, and general appearance; but this was not the case. Their father had taken them to work for him as piecers; an employment quite unsuited to the fancy of the girls, who were powerloom weavers; and being good workers and industrious, could earn from eight to twelve shillings per week each. And although the wages all went into the common fund, still there is an indefinable

pleasure to all, especially to the young, to receive personally the recompence of their toil. But to have the spending of their week's earnings was a temptation irresistible. The sum they knew would be amply sufficient to supply all their wants, both in maintenance and clothing; and so they would then have "to find themselves;" that is, leave home and live in lodgings; and what was still better, would be the entire mistresses of their own actions. It required little to induce them to adopt a course that held out so many allurements: the change of employment afforded a pretext, and of this the sisters availed themselves.

The very idea of such a project as this being seriously entertained by two young females would seem, to persons unacquainted with a factory population, too ridiculous to be regarded as credible; but events of a similar nature being of daily occurrence, they elicit neither inquiry from their masters, nor surprise amongst

their fellow workers. The young people reflected little upon the selfishness they evinced, and still less on the danger to be apprehended. The base ingratitude they were guilty of towards their parents never once crossed the minds of the two girls. The affections of the children of but too many amongst us are early estranged; and through an entire neglect, or a too great severity, both father and mother soon lose all command over their offspring. And thus as the children cease to be dependent upon them for subsistence, they become disrespectful, and leave the paternal roof without the slightest compunction being manifested.

In a pecuniary point of view, the loss to Jack would be serious, and one he was little prepared at the time to bear. But he had chiefly himself to blame; for instead of spending his wages in such a manner as to make the home of his children a happy one, he had passed all the spare hours at the beer-shop. Twenty

shillings of his weekly earnings had, for many years, gone into the pocket of mine host of the village tavern. Yes, for years did he indulge in this expensive luxury; until a lower rate of wages, and loss of credit, rather than the counsel Mr. Wynn was constantly pouring into his ear, brought about a slight reformation in his habits.

Neither the threats nor persuasions of Jack availed to turn his daughters from their purpose. They each obtained work as weavers at a mill in the town, and lodged together in a street adjoining it. .

The younger one, whose name was Dinah, during the short time she worked at Mr. Marsh's mill, had been so unfortunate as to attract the attention of young Marsh. Her sister, who was confidant in the affair, strongly urged her to repel his advances; but instead of so doing, she rather countenanced him, as it gratified her vanity, and caused the young man with whom "she kept com-

pany" to be more assiduous in his attentions.

To "keep company with," is a mode of expression synonymous to that of "being in love;" but the latter term is never applied by the lower orders to that fond passion. For no one would have said that Tom Wright was in love with Dinah Houghton, but that he kept company with her.

It might naturally be inferred that when the girls left their father's roof, young Marsh would cease to remember that Dinah had ever received any attention from him; for attachments of this nature, unlike real affections, fade from the memory when the presence of the object that caused them is removed. And so it happened now: weeks passed over and they never met, until at last Dinah, with some reluctance, consented to have the bans published,—which they were without delay,—Tom having by this time entirely got quit of his jealousy.

One Saturday evening he took his fair frail one to the singing-room frequented by young Marsh, who was at his accustomed seat in the bar. This was at one end of the room, and opposite to the stage; and through its being elevated a little above the other part of the floor, any one in it could distinguish, as well as be seen by, all in the place. Dinah had not been long in the room before her eyes met those of her forgetful admirer. Her foolish young heart fluttered with joy when he recognised her, and strolled towards the seat she occupied.

His gold studs and glittering rings soon banished poor Tom Wright from her mind; and he, upon perceiving his company was not wished for, quietly left the place; and the next morning went to the church to take down the bans. The clerk wished to know the reason why so sudden a change had taken place. His only answer was, "aw rues." He was informed that the bans would be asked out,

but he might please himself whether he were married or not.

The poor girl discovered, when too late, that she had slighted the man who could have made her happy, perhaps for life, to obtain a more specious but not lasting pleasure, by being the partaker, with others, of the dissembled affections of one above her in rank. The advice of her sister, too, came with less grace now than formerly: for she had become a mother very shortly after her marriage, which took place about that time. But Dinah thought it useless to repine; and, therefore, continued to receive the attentions of her false lover.

Jack had not felt the full effects of his first rash step, or at least his mind dwelt little upon it, until his children began to desert him. His eldest boy followed the example of the girls, and ran away to Blackburn. He could not now, as formerly, get Mr. Wynn to reason with them; though he thought at one time of

requesting that gentleman to call and speak to his children. His wife, however, objected to this course being adopted. "Ah dunnot see," said the woman, "a yo con ax him for t' cum, sin both ote wenchies has begun ah gooin tut Ranters' chapel." So the girls had not only been allowed to leave the roof of their parents, though both father and mother must have well known what consequences would follow, but were even wilfully deprived of the counsel of their old preceptor and guide, who would have esteemed it a pleasure to lead the wanderers back to the fold from which they had strayed. Jack's creditors became more importunate in proportion as the means of payment diminished. His wife advised him to take the two children who were still unemployed into the mill, both of them being more than eight years of age. Her ostensible reason for this being that it would keep them out of the streets; but the real motive that urged her to it was to get them out of the way,

so that they might not interfere with her domestic arrangements. The suggestion was accordingly acted upon, and the children admitted into the mill "as short timers," that is, they worked six hours each day, and likewise attended school. The improvidence of the parents fell upon the shoulders of the poor infants, who were compelled, thus early, to commence a life of toil. Though we shall confess, after a review of what they so frequently witnessed at home, for it will be interesting to follow their mother through a few days' occupations and amusements, that if the habits of the children were not already formed, they would be less likely to contract that worst bane of the working man, idleness, at the mill than under the roof of their parents.

Those members of the family employed at the mill rose at half-past five o'clock, and before going out made the fire. The female head of the house continued to

enjoy her bed until she had barely sufficient time left in which to make the oat-meal porridge for breakfast, and sometimes not even that. And as only half-an-hour was allowed for that meal, punctuality ought to have been imperative. But it was not so; a crust of bread being very frequently all the children could get. My lady, however, was not so easily satisfied: often, between nine and ten o'clock, she might be seen seated at a table covered with unwashed porringers, whilst an egg-shell, or a rind of bacon gave indications of better fare than that partaken of by the rest of the family.

On Thursday or Friday, as most convenient, or least idle, she commenced her washing; a day towards the close of the week being her favourite time for that scene of domestic discomfort. Her work did not begin until the forenoon was well advanced, consequently when Jack and the children returned to the mid-day meal, instead of finding dinner ready and

the wife and mother anxiously waiting their return, they found her up to the elbows in soap suds; which, through her unskilfulness, had been dashed on every side, until the floor was so flooded that the water ran off it into the street. The place reeked with steam, which rose in clouds up the stairs; where, as the windows were closed, it fell in the shape of moisture on the bed-clothes.

It will be natural to suppose she got well abused for this; and was more punctual at the tea-hour, or "baggin," as they termed it. The tea or coffee, whichever it might be, was sent to the mill about four o'clock in small cans. This duty devolved upon the children when they were at home. In the evening the family either remained out late, or retired early to bed, as the place in which they lived was hung round with half-washed, half-dried clothes, and therefore in a state of discomfort and utter confusion. This was the manner in which the washing-day

was spent; those in the early part of the week were passed by this exemplary wife, with a little variation, something in the following way.

The morning, until ten o'clock, was occupied, or wasted, in a manner similar to the one described. She afterwards went to the shop, having first locked the children in the house. Upon her return, the basket was generally well filled; we cannot say with purchases, for the system of credit was still adhered to, and the freedom of purchase, under these circumstances, was not to be had. Well; this done, dinner was generally ready in time; and, as soon after her husband's departure as possible, she cleared away the things with an unwonted degree of alacrity. She has barely had time to do this, and is just wiping down the table with her apron, when three or four women enter the house. Presently these would be succeeded by other females, until ten or a dozen were assembled. One of the child-

ren was then despatched for some cordial, and a pair of dice produced from the pocket of one of the company. The rattling of these, and the jingling of copper, might then be heard above the voices and laughter of the party. For, as the visits of the child for the exhilarating beverage became more numerous, so did the merriment of the party increase.

Some children generally followed their mothers into the house, and hung about the table, hearing all that was said, and picking up the stray halfpence, in order to get sufficient to admit them into the singing-room, when not taken there by their parents, though this was frequently done. For on the evenings of these merry-makings, Jack, tired as he must have been with his twelve hours' work, was often persuaded by his wife to take the children and herself there; where we will accompany them, and see if it was a proper place for females or children.

The room was a large one, and bril-

liantly lighted; for as the flame of a candle attracts the moth, so, in like manner, is the silly crowd drawn together by the lustre of a few gas jets. At one end a stage was fitted up, resembling that of a theatre, having a drop-curtain and scenery. Facing this, and ranged along the floor, were seats, constructed in a similar manner to the pews of a church, and with passages, or aisles between them. These were terminated by the bar, or place of honour. It was comfortably carpeted, and very showy, having a great quantity of mahogany and polished brass about it. This attractive little spot was presided over by two or three well-dressed and interesting looking young females, whose care it was to supply the liquor which increased, instead of allaying, the thirst of the assembled multitude. The uproarious applause that greeted each song, however bad it might be, was followed in its turn by greater activity amongst the waiters.

Our party, after paying a few copper pieces at the door, are allowed to enter. They find the room almost full, but contrive to seat themselves in one of the pews. The children slip away, and join their companions in another part, where they may be presently seen with a glass of beer or spirits before them, which they receive in exchange for their ticket of admittance.

The singing and music are relieved by dancing, legerdemain, or anything else that may please the senses and entice the company to indulge, and glass after glass is called for. In a few hours the atmosphere of the room becomes heavily charged with tobacco smoke; and, towards the time for closing, the most disgusting language, mixed with oaths, is but too often to be heard; and when Jack and his party rise to retire home, their heads as well as their pockets are much lighter than when they entered.

Such is the place mothers take their

children to, husbands their wives, and young men their sweethearts. As if pleasure could be obtained in such a den of vice, without a more than counterbalancing amount of misery and wretchedness being the consequence. Parents thus showing their daughters, that economy need not be their aim; though it might almost be regarded as a virtue, when practised as it ought to be by the wife of a labouring man; and yet, how few of that class of females know its true value.

If the question had been put to Jack, why he went there? he would answer, "for a spree." That is true; he goes there seeking a pleasure which he cannot find at home. But what a contrast does his foolish, drunken gaiety exhibit, when compared with the quieter, but more genuine delights he might enjoy at his own fireside.

The family, reduced both in numbers and income,—for they did not earn indi-

vidually the large wages they had done whilst at Mr. Morland's mill, were still well off, or had the means of rendering themselves so, if careful management had formed any part of their domestic study.

But a change was approaching; nay, was even now in operation; not a change that would cheer their hearts, as a gleam of sunshine, but one that was to bring them to utter destitution. Their household property began already to be reduced, piece by piece, as each succeeding week increased their difficulties.

Sharp, the new manager, was just the man for carrying out Mr. Steele's plans for the future conduct of the mill. The rents of the cottages were raised one-third, though the number of empty houses in the town had never before been so large. The hands were expected to take the milk, and other produce of the farm, often at a great loss and inconvenience to themselves.

The more Jack attempted to meet these

demands, by performing an extra quantity of work, so much the more did he spoil it, with his treble-decked mules, and so only increased his abatements, without really adding anything to the amount of his wages.

This state of things continued, without any material change, until the autumn of the same year, when the Ten Hours Bill, having passed through both houses of Parliament, was about to receive the Royal assent. This was an Act which had been looked forward to, not only by the present generation of factory operatives, but by the preceding ones, who had sunk into untimely graves, toiling, but toiling in vain, though hoping to the last for that consummation, which was only to be attained by their children, or children's children. Knowing, as the thinking portion of them well did, that with the success or failure of the measure the future happiness or misery of their lives was bound up; so the feelings of

pleasure, as well as triumph, when the day dawned that was to see, as they so fondly imagined, the termination of the long agitation, might almost have been envied by the rich, so seldom are moments of such happiness enjoyed. That the legislature were blamable for withholding this boon so many years, few are now prepared to deny. It had long been avowed, though few really credited the assertions, that the factory operatives, almost to a single individual, were prepared to sacrifice two hours' wages to obtain a proportionate amount of rest. The patience and perseverance displayed so pleased their true friends, at the head of whom was Lord Ashley, (a name that ought to be revered by every mill worker in the kingdom, and handed down from father to son to remotest posterity), that they became proud of the cause ; and, by standing prominently forward, a victory was obtained, the triumphant reward of their united efforts.

The rejoicings, though universal, were to many hearts saddened by a report which had for some time been gaining credence. It was to the effect that the provisions of the new Act could be evaded. This had not been heard of whilst the Commons were passing the Bill; it was only hinted at during the discussion in the Lords, or whispered about before the Royal assent was given. But no sooner was the signature of our gracious sovereign attached to it, than a few mill owners announced to their hands the unwelcome intelligence, that their engines would continue to run twelve hours, as usual.

Loud was the outcry of the operatives; the inspectors and magistrates were exhorted to be vigilant in their duty. But as they could conceive no device by which the law might be evaded, they flattered themselves it was only a little bravado of the opposition, to cover the defeat they had sustained.

The Bill limited the hours of labour to

eleven, for females and young persons, until the May of 1848, when the real ten hours measure came into operation. A large portion of the masters at once adopted the Bill in its full and final intention, whilst others availed themselves of the hour granted them for a few months; but a small number of selfish, grasping men, taking advantage of an ambiguity in the wording of one clause, made still more ambiguous by the attempts of the lawyers to explain it, rendered the whole Bill a nullity.

The case of the operatives working for the latter class of masters may be thus illustrated: a poor man, whose ancestors have been deprived of a valuable estate, resolves to dispute the possession of it with the now wealthy occupier. After a thirty years' suit in Chancery, during which he has stinted himself and his family that the pittance might be an earnest to the lawyers of the reward which awaited their success, a decision is granted

in the poor man's favour, and he is declared the rightful owner. His joy is excessive, as his fancy revels in the expectation of, to him, boundless wealth. For though, in the mean time, he has grown old, still the thought that his children will be the possessors of it, is an unspeakable pleasure. But his joy is short lived: the lawyers inform him that his opponent is a bankrupt, and that the estate will not be sufficient to liquidate the expenses of the suit, and so at once commence suing him for the rest. He is consequently in a much worse position than before obtaining the judgment.

So was it with some of the poor factory workers. For, instead of their long contested Bill reducing the twelve hours labour to ten, it was the very means of increasing them to thirteen. It may be said their working with these masters was optional on the part of the men; if they did not like the plan of working their children by "relays," let them go

to some other mill where the system had not been adopted. But those who use such language are either destitute of feeling, or have never known the state to which a great bulk of the population in the manufacturing towns is reduced when trade is depressed. The misery of thirteen hours toil is then preferred to starvation.

Mr. Marsh was one of the few that commenced on the new system of "re-lays." This was not done by his advice, for the disadvantages attendant upon it at once presented themselves to him, but by order of Mr. Steele. That gentleman had strained every nerve, as we have seen, to prevent the Bill passing; and as the signatures of the hands at the mill had been placed to a petition against the measure, they were informed that their names were not to be appended to any other on penalty of dismissal. No sooner was this made known to them, than a petition in favour of a Ten Hours Bill

was immediately drawn up; and received the signatures of every person connected with the works, except the manager. This galled Mr. Steele exceedingly at the time: but as he could not well carry his threat into execution, he restrained his wrath for a little while, resolving to take ample revenge when an opportunity offered itself: the present one was, therefore, seized upon. The schemes resorted to for violating the intention of the new Bill, though not exactly similar, all tended to the same end. The one adopted at Mr. Marsh's mill, was this—for every eleven females, or young persons, an extra hand was employed. The eleven commenced work as usual, at six o'clock; at seven o'clock one of them was sent out of the mill, and the twelfth, or relay hand, now came in to take her place. Upon the expiration of an hour, the eleventh returned to her work, and the twelfth took the place of the tenth for the next hour; and so continued to do throughout the day. Thus the engine ran twelve

hours, but the females, individually, only worked eleven. And by augmenting the number of relays, the working hours of the adults could be increased to the extent of their power of endurance.

The glaring abuses fostered by this system, were sufficient to convince any one, not blinded by prejudice, or actuated by sordid motives, of its evil tendencies. The shift-hand might not be so skilful a worker as the one whose place she had temporarily supplied; and as her interest was not a tithe in each case, a degree of carelessness ensued, causing endless disputes as to whom the blame of the spoiled work was to be attached; and creating a rancorous spirit amongst those who had previously worked together as friends. The moral effect was still more deplorable. In a large establishment, fifty or more, females, and young persons of both sexes, would be turned out at one time to spend the hour as they best could. To those living at a distance this short space

of time was useless, or even worse than useless. They herded together in the neighbouring houses, public or private, in preference to encountering the wet and cold. At some mills a school-room was fitted up for them. This was little better than an empty parade of attention to the well-being of the workpeople; a room into which philanthropic ladies and honourable gentlemen were to be shown. For if not so; if these masters were really anxious, as they, some of them, professed to be, that their workpeople should be educated in order to increase their happiness: then, why not give the adults, likewise, the benefit of the hour, which it was the intention of the law to have granted them? For the men are more in want of instruction than are their juniors. But, as little is learnt by forced teaching, so, consequently, little was lost by them. The hour during which the children were confined, but for which they received no wages, was looked upon as a sore grievance.

CHAPTER XI.

“Love thee?—so well, so tenderly
Thou’rt loved, ador’d by me,
Fame, fortune, wealth, and liberty
Were worthless without thee.
Though brimm’d with blessings, pure and rare,
Life’s cup before me lay,
Unless thy love were mingled there,
I’d spurn the draught away.”

MOORE.

It is time we should return to Maria, from whom we parted on the evening of her final interview with Frank Morland; an interview as unpremeditated by him, as it was unlooked for by her; though it might appear, from the strange way in which it occurred, that she had intentionally given Frank this last opportunity of avowing his attachment for her: but this was not the case. No disregard for Frank’s love had actuated her previous

conduct. For if she had studied her own inclinations only, without looking to the ultimate consequence of such a course, she might have taken advantage of the almost daily opportunities which happened of conversing with him. It cost her more real misery to compel herself to deny Frank this privilege, than any she had yet experienced since leaving her native county.

Prudence pointed out how injudicious it would be for her to permit what might only prove a mutual regard for each other,—she dared not think of it under the name of affection, to ripen into the passion of love, which it certainly would if not strenuously opposed,—though in reality, the very means she was taking to avoid this, were only tending to make that passion the stronger when it came, as come it inevitably must.

The unassuming bashfulness of the lovely stranger, and her desire not to entangle him, only added so much the

more ardour to Frank's constantly increasing affection for her. During the few casual interviews he had enjoyed with her, short as these were, he had marked, with a strange and unwonted pleasure, that her mind was endowed with even greater powers of attraction and amiableness than are usually bestowed upon many holding a much higher rank in society. Her image had, by degrees, been taking possession of his mind until it displaced every other, and that too, before he was conscious of her having obtained any ascendancy over him. Nor was it until he became fully persuaded of Maria's silent, though unmistakable wish that they should not meet, which caused a suspicion of some object dearer than himself being already in possession of her heart, that he became fully aware of his position. Harassed by contending emotions he resolved to combat with his affection, and by gaiety and a change of scene, endeavour to obliterate the remem-

brance of Maria from his thoughts. It required little reflection to convince him that Mr. Morland would not consent to his forming a connexion with one so much their inferior in station. His sense of honour, therefore, forbade him to persist. The visits he paid to Mrs. Marsh's drawing-room assemblies became more frequent; so much so, indeed, as to cause that lady, as we have already seen, to make sure of him as the suitor of her daughter Ann.

Old Hargreaves, unconscious of the deep interest Maria felt in anything that related to her young master, communicated this news to her; adding that he had frequently seen Miss Ann, when calling with messages from Mr. Frank, "On h'ooos a reet clever lass," said he; "ah near sead a bonnier in au my life till what hoo is, barin yoursel. But ha thinks mony a time as hoo'l near do for't young mester, nother; for hoo carries hersel like ony great lady, though hoos

nobbut a cotton spinner's dowter when hoose done."

The old man was so taken up with his story, and the dame's attention entirely engrossed with listening,—for the subject was one which all females from fifteen and upwards regard as a most pleasing and highly important one,—that neither perceived how Maria was striving in vain to repress the tears which had gathered beneath her long lashes, and dimmed the lustre of her eyes, ere they escaped noiselessly from their beautiful prison. She could not restrain her emotion,—but rose, and when the old man ceased speaking, hurried to her small chamber and there indulged her grief, too strong for control, and we might almost say too sacred for human eye to witness. Various thoughts rushed through her agitated mind. First she imagined Frank had never really loved her, or he would not so soon have deserted her for another; she then reflected it was herself that had

driven him to do this: one moment repenting of her cool behaviour towards her lover, the next accusing him.

When she became a little calmer she knelt down and poured forth all her griefs—all her trials, before Him, who is ever willing to hear the fervent petitions of those that sincerely put their trust in His divine power. She prayed for wisdom to guide her in the severe trial through which it was His pleasure she should pass, and for strength to enable her to support it. She prayed also that Frank Morland might be protected by His Almighty hand, and that happiness and prosperity might remain with him through life.

Her devotions relieved her so much, that in a little time she felt almost happy. She was now free from the ambitious thoughts, which, in spite of all her endeavours to subdue them, would, like dreams of the night, occasionally flit across her mind; and be, like them, for-

gotten when reason returned. But the struggle it occasioned her told too plainly that hers had not been a mere transitory affection,—a mere acquaintanceship to be formed and broken off at pleasure.

This occurred on a Sunday evening, and the gloom of a March night was fast hiding distant objects from view, before Maria became aware that she had spent an hour in her chamber, and was afraid lest the old people might be waiting for her: for, after the evening repast, Maria, when their reverend visitor was not at the lodge, would cheer them by her conversation, or by reading a few chapters from the bible. She accordingly endeavoured to hide all traces of sadness, and was descending when she heard the sound of carriage wheels on the gravel-road. The noise ceased at the gate; when, partly impelled by curiosity, and partly by a feeling she could not resist, she flew to one of the windows that overlooked the park, and perceived just be-

neath, standing at the lodge gate, an open carriage of Mr. Morland's. That gentleman, leaning over one side of it, and with his back turned towards the cottage, was conversing with old Hargreaves, whilst Frank was anxiously examining each little window, in expectation of seeing the fairy form that he knew the cottage contained, and with which his imagination was constantly haunted,—hoping, though still at the same time he almost feared, to have his wish realized.

But his fears vanished the moment his eyes met those of Maria, when she appeared at the lattice window. There she remained an instant, as if fascinated. Frank saluted her unobserved, and the carriage rolled off and was immediately hidden by the intervening trees. Often during that evening spent at Mr. Marsh's, did he contrast in his mind the infinite superiority of the unadorned loveliness and sweet temper of Maria, over the gor-

geously arrayed, but proudly beautiful Ann Marsh.

It was whilst in this unstable state of mind, that he expressed a wish to leave the country; hoping that new scenes would restore to him his accustomed equanimity. We have seen how these ideas were swept away, and in one short hour replaced by sentiments that opened to him a new train of thoughts,—an almost new existence. He would now have willingly relinquished his design of proceeding to India, though the arrangements were all completed, had not Maria convinced him of the rashness and inutility of such a course.

When Frank had bidden her farewell, and followed Mr. Wynn, she remained a long time lost in thought. It was with great difficulty she persuaded herself that it had not been a pleasing dream, a flattering delusion. This, however, it could not have been, for her ear still retained the sound of the parting words, which he

had poured into it, whilst his eyes beamed with the love his language inadequately expressed.

Sometime after Mr. Wynn had left the lodge, Dame Hargreaves, wondering at Maria's long absence, a circumstance so unusual when their pastor was with them, went into the room to look for her. She found the object of her search in a gentle slumber, which had gradually stolen over her confused and bewildered senses.

The old dame was amazed at the beauty of the sleeping girl, with which, though she must by this time have become familiar, still, like Haydn's music, it only appeared the more pleasing through her very familiarity with it, and stood gazing a few minutes upon her placid countenance before awakening her. This she was about to do when Maria's lips moved. "Oh, do tell Mr. Wynn everything: how happy I shall be if he will—if he may forgive me!" The sound of her own voice awoke her. And conscious of having

uttered something, she was not a little relieved upon having it related.

Frank called at the lodge on the following morning; but as Maria was at the mill, he thought it would be more prudent to inform her by letter of the approbation their mutual and reverend friend had expressed of the line of conduct each of them had pursued; and of his wish to be regarded as both her friend and guardian. He exhorted her to listen to his counsel, and be guided by him in everything. And to put it within her power to leave the mill at any time she chose, he enclosed a bank of England note for one hundred pounds. The letter he placed in her bible; and left the country without again seeing her.

Maria would have dreaded the first interview with her worthy pastor, had not Frank's communication made her acquainted with his approval of the affair; and that she might henceforth consider him, not merely as her spiritual guide

and friend, but lean upon him as a father, and love him with the love of a daughter. With sentiments such as these in her pure and confiding breast, she looked forward to the hour of meeting with feelings of pleasure, as though about to be once more united to a parent. This is a feeling only to be fully appreciated by those who, whilst young, have, through the inscrutable decrees of Providence, been deprived of that most inestimable of all God's gifts to man, a parent's love.

Mr. Wynn deferred the first interview a few days, in order to allow his young charge a little time to calm her agitated mind.

The Friday of the week he chose for his visit was Good Friday, on the anniversary of which Mr. Morland always closed his mills, even before the law compelled him to do so. The reverend gentleman took advantage of the holiday to call at the lodge; and, as the evening was fine, he requested Maria to accompany

him to the Parsonage for some books he wished her to read. Old Hargreaves offered to follow them, so that she would not have to return alone through the park. This the reverend gentleman declined, saying he would see his young friend safe home.

He had not, until then, mentioned the subject which he knew to be uppermost in the thoughts of his fair companion; but now that they were alone, he addressed her in a tone so mild and encouraging, as at once to convince her that the good man's heart was with her.

"I have been thinking, very seriously, my dear girl," said he, "about the unexpected change that has so suddenly taken place in your prospects, promising you so great an addition of worldly happiness. I hope no alloy of pride may creep in to mar it, and sully the brightness with its deadening influence."

"My only pride, sir, shall be, in having acquired your esteem, and though quite

undeserving of it, the love of Frank Morland."

"Frank informed me," continued Mr. Wynn, "that it was the wish of each that I should become acquainted with his honourable intentions. For you both rightly judged, that unless assured of this, the regard I have always evinced for you since it has pleased God to place us in the same community, must of necessity have abated."

A blush of wounded innocence for a moment overspread Maria's cheeks, which her companion was far from displeased at observing, but hastened to relieve her. "Do not imagine," said he, "that I had, up to that evening, ever experienced one single thought on so painful a subject on your account, my dear girl. But I have lived long enough in the world to have learnt from sad experience, and also by a close observation of the conduct of others, that even to the best of us there are moments of weakness,

in which the frailties of our nature take the precedence of our better qualities: of this I had been reminded many, many times. But it was with extreme anguish that I brought my mind to think that you had also deceived me. Do not weep, Maria; for gold that is cast into the furnace loses nothing of its value by the trial, but is always returned to us the purer; so did your noble conduct through the whole affair only tend to increase my esteem for you."

"Oh, sir," said Maria, and she clasped the old man by the hand, for in the earnestness of conversation they had ceased walking, "I cannot tell why you are so kind to me, why Mr. Frank loves me, why you love me; I am not worthy, I am not deserving of so much happiness."

"I hope, my dear girl," replied he, "that this is only the dawning of a joy, of a happiness to continue through life, and be equally merited at its close as it is

now. But though I fully concur in what Frank has done, I am sure Mr. Morland would not at present be prepared, for many reasons, to give his consent. This placed me in an unpleasant dilemma. For strictly speaking, it was my duty to have informed him of the whole circumstance: this I certainly should have done, had not his son's immediate departure, and probable long absence from the country, coupled with my own ignorance of everything relating to your history previous to our meeting here, rendered such a course both futile and highly impolitic; at least, so I thought. For, with regard to the latter reason, I have little doubt, in my own mind, that Mr. Morland's first demand would have been for some information relative to the former position in life of her whom he was asked to receive as his daughter. Nor do I think he would have been satisfied with the only reply we could have made—that we took your present worth as testimony of a former

higher station in the world. My knowledge embraces no other circumstance in the history of your own life, or that of your brother, than the fact of your being orphans and friendless."

Maria felt the truth of Mr. Wynn's words; his looks, too, and half reproving tone of voice told her that he wished to learn from her own lips something on the subject he had mentioned.

"I have had one sorrow," she replied, "a deep but only one, in receiving from you the kind attention, yea, may I not, sir, call it by a dearer name?—may I not say the parental solicitude with which you strove to alleviate, upon my first arrival, my many distresses."

"A duty, my dear girl," said Mr. Wynn, "that was, through God's help, both pleasing and easy to accomplish."

"And as you showered upon me each succeeding day joys and pleasing hopes, too sweet to be enjoyed but by those to whom affliction has long been familiar,

this grief became the stronger. I knew my inability to tell you that which my tongue would fain have uttered. And could I have laid open to you all my heart, oh, how happy should I have been."

"I hope your motive does not arise from a false delicacy," said the reverend gentleman ; "poverty to me is no crime; and I am quite sure that pride is equally abhorrent to both of us."

"It is not shame that constrains me to keep back anything from the dearest friend I have in the world; but—oh, I must not—I dare not say more. Perhaps God, in his own good time, may grant me power to disclose my tale of sorrow. But if not, and you still call me daughter, and Frank Morland will love me for what I am—oh, never—never shall I cease to bless Him who gave me such blessings."

"It was no mere idle curiosity that caused me to allude to this topic, Maria," said Mr. Wynn, with deep emotion, for he was much affected with the tone and

manner of his young companion; "but I feel that a great responsibility has devolved upon me, not only to Frank, in accepting from him, as I have, the guardianship of her he loves; but also to Mr. Morland, and yourself. Now I should not have done this had I not been fully convinced in my own mind, that whatever Maria St. Crost might now appear to be she is in every way worthy of the love of my young pupil. I must confess, however, that it would have been no small pleasure to be able to stay the malicious tongues by assuring them, that though it was your virtues only that first won our esteem, we now possessed that which would command theirs. But it was not on account of any doubts having entered my own mind, or from any wish expressed by Frank, that I have referred to the subject at all, nor shall I again do so; hoping that what has already been said may give me sufficient grounds for assisting Frank to obtain from Mr. Morland

his consent to your union; for he is, as yet, ignorant of all that has passed. I thought that the chance of some new feature being developed during his son's absence might justify the course we have taken. But, if you desire it, I will write to Frank, and having obtained his consent the whole matter shall be laid open to Mr. Morland at once."

"Do not break it to Mr. Morland, sir, it would make him so unhappy. We are both very foolish; and—perhaps—if you were to tell Mr. Frank to forget me—to cease—to——"

"Tell Frank to forget you!" rejoined Mr. Wynn. "No, my dear girl. I told him, before we parted, that if he ceased to remember you, he never could be really happy afterwards. Nor shall I omit any opportunity to remind him of this."

"He wished me to leave the mill, sir, but this I shall not do. Providence has placed me there with some motive, and there I am resolved to remain—at least

until Mr. Frank's return. But to enable me to do so if I wished, he placed this bank note in my Bible. But as I shall not want it, it will be a pleasure to restore it to him upon his return."

"Why, here is a bank of England note for one hundred pounds," said Mr. Wynn; "I will put it in a place of safety, and so that you can have it when you wish."

They had now arrived at the Parsonage, where Maria was received with a smiling welcome from Mrs. Wynn, with whom she had long been a favourite; though she, as well as others, was entirely unacquainted with the young stranger's history.

Maria was now in the enjoyment of more happiness than she had at one time hoped ever again to possess. She was beloved by a young man of talent and fortune; had won the friendship of one of the best of men, and the respect of all with whom she came in contact.

Months glided gently by, and each day was gladdened with the pleasures of hope;

the only alloys being the disagreeable and confining employment, and an anxiety on her brother's account. Against the former, she bore up with renewed ardour; frequently injuring her health through her endeavours to sustain, along with her fellow-workers, the long hours of labour. But it was less irksome to their untutored minds, inured to it from their very childhood, than to a stranger, and she susceptible of the finest impulses of our nature. Hargreaves began to look upon her as his daughter restored to him again, for he had lost his only one when she was a young woman, and now, therefore, paid the greatest attention to Maria's health. Upon perceiving that she was unwell, he would say, "I'st put oud Sally upo' thy frame for sick to-day, so thou'd better not go to th'mill." Thus she surmounted her own slight troubles easily. But Edwin was the cause of greater perplexity and uneasiness.

He was of a temper of mind quite the

opposite to that with which his sister was graced, being constantly at variance with his overlookers. His proud heart rebelled against the abject submission required from him by those men, and paid to them by his companions. But as discipline was absolutely necessary, Mr. Morland himself was obliged to reprimand him before he would succumb. Constant confinement and unhealthy work gradually conquered his boyish spirits; but he had long resolved, with a fixed determination, to leave the hated cotton-mill when an opportunity served, let the consequence be what it might.

It was about the time the Ten Hours Bill was before the House of Lords, that Edwin was most strongly bent upon his project of running away. He communicated his plans to Maria, who quite disapproved of them.

"You would certainly be followed," said she, "and brought back. And, even if you were to reach the village, I cannot

conceive what you could do there. If any of the farmers took you in, they would share the fate of poor Goodram; and for him to have sacrificed himself for us is enough, without bringing ruin into another family."

"I would much rather," replied he, "breathe the fresh air there as a labourer, than remain here in these hot rooms, and be suffocated with dust. And then, why did that rascal, for he is one, send us here at all? I do not think any one knows where we are."

Maria was of the same opinion, but did not wish to incite him by saying so.

"Remember the threats he held out against us," she remarked, "if we attempted to leave this place."

"I do remember it; and that only convinces me that all is not right, if we could only have justice."

"We must hope that, before long, some change for the better will take place," said Maria. "We shall shortly have

more time in the evenings, when, perhaps, we can arrange some plan for the future."

Edwin, at her earnest entreaty, consented, for the present, to forego his scheme; and though he adhered for a time to this promise, still his thoughts were constantly brooding over the bondage in which he was placed. Yet the mere fact of his having formed such a resolution was a far deeper source of anxiety to his sister than the precarious state of her health. But this annoyance was, for a time, removed when the Ten Hours Bill became the law of the land. Edwin had now two hours each evening to devote to instruction or amusement. He undertook to teach a few of the young men the game of cricket, a recreation hitherto unknown amongst them,—Saturday having been the only evening during which they could have enjoyed that, or any other out-of-door exercise. The school-room at the mills was now opened

four evenings each week. Two of these were for the females. Maria willingly complied with a wish Mr. Wynn expressed, that she should take the superintendency of the school on one of these nights. She found her pupils almost entirely ignorant of the very simplest work of the seamstress. Few who had been brought up in the mill could either sew neatly or read with anything approaching fluency. Aided by her reverend friend, however, she entered upon the pleasing task. It fell to her lot to teach, not only "the young idea," but also those of riper years, an art with which every child of the female sex ought to be familiar. The kind way in which she performed this duty was far from creating a feeling of envy against her,—so opposite was it to that of the paid mistress, who attended on the other evening. There was no display of superiority, she treated all as equals; consequently, all shared in her own enthusiasm—paying

her more respect than they had ever before done to any one in their own station of life. But, what afforded her the most gratification was the pleasure Mr. Wynn expressed at the success attendant upon her endeavours; and by this alone she thought herself more than repaid.

Once, and sometimes twice a month, letters were received from India; and amongst them was always one, or more, for the Parsonage, under cover of which Frank corresponded with Maria. His letters to her expressed the unabated ardour of his love; whilst those addressed to his reverend friend were filled with anxious fears, such as a man would communicate to him in whose care he had placed the most precious of his worldly effects. He blamed himself for not removing Maria to some place more suitable for her; and it took all his friend's skill, and assurance of her continued welfare, to induce him to remain in India until the completion of his commercial affairs. The

arrival of the overland mail was anticipated with as great a degree of solicitude by Maria, as by her Majesty's advisers, and certainly with more pleasure. For them it would bring despatches from the seat of war; accounts of carnage, and possibly of defeat; crops blighted; or British subjects massacred by Bornean pirates;—but for her only peace. The greatest dread she had, the unhealthiness of the climate, was joyfully dispelled, for the moment, by each successive letter.

CHAPTER XII.

"Hear me, ye venerable core,
As counsel for poor mortals,
That frequent pass douce Wisdom's door
For glaikit Folly's portals;
I, for their thoughtless, careless sakes,
Would here propone defences,
Their donsie tricks, their black mistakes,
Their failings and mischances."

BURNS.

It was on one of those happy occasions so seldom occurring in either commercial or political life, namely, the receipt of foreign letters, in which the news conveyed is entirely of a pleasing nature, that Mr. Morland called at the Parsonage with those he had just received from his son, and to discuss, along with a bottle of old port, the news brought by the mail. Mr. Wynn, forgetful of the usual contents enclosed in Frank's letters, opened the

one his friend gave him, allowing, inadvertently, a small sealed note to fall upon the carpet.

"Frank," said Mr. Morland, "is an indefatigable correspondent. But I am afraid he is giving your lady an unnecessary trouble, by writing to both herself and you."

Mr. Wynn picked up the note without making any reply; and, as he did so, a momentary feeling that he was acting a wrong part crossed his mind. "Frank, however," thought he, "will be at home very shortly, and then, I have no doubt, all can be explained with satisfaction."

After conversing upon the prospects of the war in the Punjaub, Mr. Wynn asked his friend if Frank had fixed the time for his return.

"He writes," said Mr. Morland, "informing me that all the commercial arrangements are satisfactorily completed, though he has had to encounter greater difficulties than he expected. And think-

ing himself fairly entitled to a little recreation, throws out a few hints about having accepted an invitation to join a party who were preparing to ascend the River Ganges as far as Delhi. I perfectly concur in this, for, as he may never be in India again, it would be foolish to return without having seen a little of the country, or the manners of the Hindoos in some of the purely native towns."

"If we could consider the fevers and other hazards," rejoined Mr. Wynn, "constantly to be dreaded, and always attendant upon river travelling in India, as incidents that increased the pleasure, simply because they increased the danger, —then we should agree; but I think if the risk to be run is weighed against the advantage to be gained, the latter will be found wanting."

"Frank is prudent, and will take care of himself," replied Mr. Morland. "It is time he should think about England though; I feel his absence more and

more every week. The time since he left us, only eleven months, appears almost to have stretched over years. I often picture to myself with great pleasure the smile of triumph his countenance will exhibit when we inform him that the great social improvement he was so sanguine about, is likely to exceed even his expectations."

"You allude, Mr. Morland, to the Ten Hours Bill?"

"Yes, that Bill I opposed and thwarted by all the fair means I could devise. And to you, my dear sir, all the thanks are due for my conversion; it was your sincerity in the cause, and a few well-supported reasons, that first ushered in a dawn of hope. I began to think that some of our main arguments, if equitably and impartially weighed, would be found very foolish; whilst many of them had no solid foundation whatever,—they were merely empty words. These new ideas had almost amounted to conviction when the Bill passed; and thus very inopportunistically

prevented me becoming a convert to reason, without having to wait for practical demonstration. But, as it was, a feeling of wounded pride at being defeated by the operatives, together, I own, with a little spite, influenced in some degree the order I gave for an immediate adoption of the Ten Hours clause. The reduction of wages was proportionate to that in the time of working, being determined they should give their darling measure a fair trial. You know, Mr. Wynn, perhaps better than I do myself, what the issue promises."

"Yes, sir," replied his friend, "my hopes are, so far, more than realized. Some of my predictions, which were to be the work of years, are already accomplished. I am only afraid the enthusiasm will diminish when the novelty has ceased. I remember conversing with many of the factory operatives soon after the new regulation was commenced. They were almost bewildered by the extent of the

boon they had obtained; and expressed their fears that it would be snatched away from them, as being too great a blessing to be long enjoyed. Not one grudged the diminution of his earnings, but all affirmed, with apparent sincerity, that they were now contented. But of course there will be some restless spirits that never would be satisfied, for I do not suppose that the Bill will have a direct tendency towards reforming drunkards; but, at the same time, I do know that it has not increased that crime in my district."

"Then it has not fulfilled the predictions of its opponents," rejoined Mr. Morland; "one of our chief arguments having been, that the two hours would be spent at the beershop, and so the operative would not only squander his time but his money."

"I find the people are getting alarmed about this plan some of you millowners have been cunning enough to devise, and

by which the law is likely to become so much waste parchment."

"You allude to the relay system, sir?"

"If the worst enemy of these men," continued Mr. Wynn, "had been requested to find a name for their scheme, he could not have fixed upon one more appropriate, or that would have given the world so good an idea of it, and the characters of those who avail themselves of the plan. It is well worthy of the design. The only definition Dr. Johnson gives to this word is a 'change of horses on the road,' and to that sense we must confine it,—a change of brutes."

"Then, Mr. Wynn, you would infer that these men are using the workpeople, who have the misfortune to be dependent upon them, just as they would so many horses; and that they thus save you the trouble of proving your case by having applied to their own scheme a term which, in the English language, is used only with reference to brutes?"

"No, sir, I will not do that; the proof can be easily deduced from the working of a system that brings nothing but anxiety to the master, and creates an ill-feeling amongst his operatives. But whilst pluming ourselves upon the good effects likely to flow from the recent change, we ought not to forget that, as individuals, we can be the means of introducing many beneficial improvements amongst those whose well-being or otherwise does, through Providence, mainly depend upon ourselves. The present is, I think, a fitting opportunity for reforming the ideas of domestic life, of which many of your tenants seem to have very peculiar notions."

"I shall be happy to hear any suggestions, Mr. Wynn, that may have occurred to you, by which their comfort can be increased."

"It is something of greater importance than mere comforts, my dear sir," replied the reverend gentleman, "that I feel myself

called upon to speak of. There is a practice I have long wished to see abolished,—a glaring and common offence against decency and morals, and over which you have a perfect right of control, for it exists amongst your own tenantry: and that is, the way in which the people congregate together, as if there was not house-room enough for all. In some of the cottages, containing only two rooms, there are eight, ten, and in one case twelve individuals sleeping each night.”

“How do they contrive that, Mr. Wynn? A little ingenuity will be required, I imagine.”

“The man, his wife, and four children—one a young man—occupy half the upper apartment, across which is hung a curtain, the other half being let to three young women. The lodgers in the lower room vary in number,—they have now three. The unhealthiness of this, if that were the only evil attendant upon it, would, of itself, justify an interference.

Can such a place, I ask, be called by the endearing name of home?"

"I should say not. But this is all new to me. I would not have allowed it had I been aware that it was carried to such an extent. Of course we could not interfere as long as they kept within the bounds of decency; for some are ill enough plagued to live, and have to eke out their little money in the best way they can."

"I am glad you have taken the matter up, Mr. Morland. But there is another subject I wish to allude to,—the sad occurrence that happened in the village yesterday. Amongst other evidence given this morning at the inquest, it was stated that both the father and mother of the infant work at the mills. They had three children; the oldest, not seven years of age, being left in charge of her brothers from six o'clock in the morning till the mill closed at night. Yesterday the little things were locked up as usual, when, by

some accident or other, the clothes of one of them became ignited; and, before the neighbours could be alarmed, the poor child was so much injured that it died during the forenoon. Now, the accident can be attributed to no other cause than the absence of its mother at the mill."

"I am not, my dear sir," replied Mr. Morland, "about to advocate an indiscriminate employment of married females away from home; far from it. I wish most sincerely that it was consistent with true humanity to prevent it altogether; but I certainly cannot think it would be justifiable in me to say, that every woman, when she becomes a mother, shall leave my employ. It is a fact well established, and admitted by all who have carefully watched the progress of events, that one of the greatest evils flowing from our factory system is the youthful age at which the people marry. And hence, in a great measure, we may account for the astonishing and unprecedented increase

that has taken place, during the last half century, in the population of this county; independent of those who have migrated here from different parts of the country. Take the instance of the very persons you have mentioned. Hargreaves informs me they were married five years ago. At that time the husband was a boy of eighteen, the girl his junior by a year. Their united weekly earnings amounted then, as now, to fourteen shillings; of which small pittance almost one-half is obtained by the wife."

"But, sir," asked Mr. Wynn, "why cannot the husband acquire that sum himself? I know many in your employ who take home twice as much; the produce, too, of their individual earnings."

"He is not a servant of mine, but of the spinner for whom he pieces. Now, what would become of this family, supposing I were to adopt your theory, and give an order that the wife should no longer be employed at my mills, because she

might be better engaged attending to her domestic duties? They would look upon it as a mockery,—which it really would be. There are not many domestic duties to perform with a weekly income of eight shillings. It would certainly have the appearance of heartlessness to reply to their entreaty for permission to maintain their children by the sweat of their brows, that our philanthropy would not allow us to work a mother, they must go to the relieving officer. And this, I am sorry to say, is not a solitary instance of children being as much dependent for subsistence on the earnings of the mother as of the father.”

“A short time ago,” said Mr. Wynn, “a girl, only sixteen years of age, presented herself as a candidate for marriage. I fully expected the bans would be forbidden. But two Sundays passed without anything being said; so, before the last time of publishing them, I went to see her mother about it. The woman

appeared surprised that I should consider the extreme youth of her daughter any detriment; merely saying, 'Why, yo seen,' for they always begin their apologetical argument with that, 'Why, yo seen, hoo's ollus bin a forrod lass, like, and hur father thout it time for hur t' be wed.' This put an end to all reasoning, for I could not say but that it was the most judicious course. The early age at which imprudent conduct manifests itself, is almost incredible. But I am not satisfied yet about the young man. If he has been a piecer so many years, how is it he does not commence spinning; I should imagine he is old enough?"

"Certainly he is," replied Mr. Morland; "his age is not the cause; but the great improvements that are constantly being made, our discoveries in mechanics that we boast so much about—priding ourselves upon them, until we have almost made skill in mechanism to be considered a national virtue, instead of being re-

garded as a national failing. For the greater amount of manual labour displaced by an invention, so much the more is it lauded; though every step we take, as we think in advance, only places us eventually in a more dangerous position. We are in a situation similar to that in which a man would be if placed in a carriage on an inclined plane: as the velocity increased, he would add break after break to the wheels to retard his speed; but this would only answer as long as the strength of the carriage lasted, which, by certain laws of mechanics, must sooner or later fail, and then would come the crash."

"Have not these improvements lessened the labour attendant upon the working of the machines, Mr. Morland? If so, an incalculable benefit has been gained for the operative."

"Philanthropists, or one class of them at least, tell us that such is the case. Let us, however, examine whether it be true

or not. If we have taken the weight off his shoulders, we have only done so to replace it by one still heavier in another shape; and, if he does not carry it, he draws it. Over-production, coupled with domestic and foreign competition, induce each of us to forget our country's honour in the too eager attention we pay to our own individual welfare. The natural consequence is, we are becoming, as a class, extremely selfish; each trying to produce cheaper than his neighbour. And as friendship is never allowed to interfere with business; a man will drive his own father out of the market, if he can only get the advantage of even a shade in price. In order to obtain this advantage, the length of the mule, or spinning-wheel, has been gradually extended, until at last we have had to remove the machinery from the old mills and replace it with new, stretching from one end of the building to the other. By doing this, eight spinners can now produce the same

amount of yarn which, twenty years ago, it required from twenty to thirty to accomplish."

"Thus, many will be either thrown out of work, or have to procure some other employment?"

"Yes. Hargreaves or Crompton little imagined that one man would, before a century had elapsed, be spinning upon upwards of two thousand spindles. But yet all this is not invention; it is only multiplying the capabilities of the original machine. Very little credit for originality can be given to any of our more modern mechanists, except to the inventors of the power-loom, or the self-acting mule. But the avowed object of all this is to lessen the cost of production, by cheapening labour, displacing adults with children and females. Hence we find, that the young man in question, instead of having been promoted, is still only a piecer,—his labour was not wanted in any other form."

“The transformation has certainly been alarmingly rapid,” said Mr. Wynn. “The hand-wheel, with its single spindle, which our own grandmothers used, and which was synonymous with pleasure and industry, both in the cottage and the hall, and regarded with such feelings of attachment, that, had we been heathens, it would have taken its place among our penates, has, in two generations, become a myth—this giant having devoured it, without a trace being left. I cannot see where the advantage, in point of happiness, is to be looked for. Instead of the daughters of our land working at home under the eye of their mothers, they are now congregated in large numbers, and freed from all restraint. But I interrupted you, sir.”

“Two or three men,” continued Mr. Morland, “with the assistance of five children each, are now capable of spinning a greater length of thread in a given time, than ten thousand of our fair ancestors

could, let them have plied their fingers at the distaff never so nimbly. But, instead of this being a subject of congratulation to me, I confess I sometimes feel a dread at the artificial nature of the structure we have raised. The seed planted by Hargreaves, instead of producing an oak, which only the growth of centuries ought to have brought to its prime, and thus given its roots time to stretch out, so as to sustain such a vast superstructure, has burst into a gigantic exotic, the growth of which has been too rapid for men to keep pace with. For no sooner had one man arrived at the topmost branch, expecting to be borne up with it, and so remain above his fellows, than a bud grows out of the stem, and, shooting aloft, leaves him far in the shade. Observe the two trees that stand near the margin of the pond; the oak, in the full pride of beauty of foliage, and elegant in shape, not too bulky,—that is as our trade ought to have been. But the other tree

is our prototype, that large unwieldy willow; so large is it, that there is not sufficient sap to supply its innumerable branches. See how the twigs crowd upon one another, many of them blighted, and almost all laden with yellow, sickly leaves. It is evident the roots have penetrated below the soil, and are even now drawing their vital principle from an unhealthy source. Our cotton trade is an unnatural, an unprecedented state of things, one that renders the inhabitants of a large portion of this empire as much dependent upon foreigners for even the very necessities of life, as ever the Romans were for their grain. War with the United States, or an emancipation of their slaves, would reduce Lancashire, with its teeming population, to a condition far too fearful to contemplate."

"Is slave labour, Mr. Morland, so essential, then, to the growth of cotton?"

"If the example afforded by the negroes of our West India Islands is any guide as

to the result of a similar movement in the States of the Union, then I should say, Mr. Wynn, without hesitation, that slave-labour is absolutely essential to the cultivation of a sufficient quantity of cotton to supply the machinery even now at work. For there is not a country in the world that can export cotton to any extent, unless she is a slave holding nation—India excepted.”

“Humanity will forbid us to join in so dreadful a conclusion as that,” replied the reverend gentleman — “a nation’s commerce, England’s staple trade, fostering and supported by slavery. Let us look round, sir; I think we shall find some fountain free from the contamination. Egypt is an exception; she exports cotton to this country in considerable quantities.”

“Happy would it be, Mr. Wynn, for the prosperity of the present inhabitants of the valley of the Nile, if slavery were the name by which their toil was known

to the world; for then the word 'emancipation,' would bear to the heart of every Egyptian serf, a charm now without existence, because beyond hope. They sow and plant just what is commanded, and they reap the harvest too, but they never enjoy the fruits. I imagine that with slave labour our East India cotton could be greatly improved in quality: for two things are required to grow cotton successfully in any part of the world—cheap constant labour, and unremitting attention. Not that I am an advocate for slavery, for I abhor it as much as any man can do."

"Your strain of argument, Mr. Morland, is somewhat different from that adopted by many of your contemporaries, who talk of growing it in our own colonies."

"Look the wide world through, Mr. Wynn, and I do not think you will find an equal number of men, possessed of a similar amount of real wealth and down-

right ignorance, as that enjoyed by the master manufacturers of Lancashire. Of course there are many amongst them who shine in erudition, and are gentlemen in everything but name. But the greater portion know no more about the history of their cottons, than the mere name they bear. Surat may be one of the United States, or Bahia in the East Indies, for anything they know, or care to learn."

"But many of those," rejoined Mr. Wynn, "who now roll along the street in their carriages, have risen from the rank of operatives."

"Which is no excuse, my dear sir, for their ignorance. Their means and facilities for acquiring knowledge increased with their wealth; and if they think it so necessary to the happiness of man, as many of them say it is, that he should be educated, then why not have begun at home? A vulgar pride that apes homeliness, causes a few to adhere

to their old manner of speaking; but as their motive is evident enough, it only makes them contemptible. But how are your young protégés going on, sir?"

"The rustics from Suffolk?"

"Yes, sir; I am afraid your prediction is likely to prove but too true."

"In some individuals, Mr. Morland, it has already been verified. Many of the older boys are become sad reprobates; and I am sorry to have to add, that few of the young women conduct themselves with propriety: the children we may entertain some hope for; but it required little knowledge of the rustic character to foresee this."

"We have been disappointed with them as workers. They are either too high spirited to submit to restraint, or too sullen to learn anything. There was one lad as wild as a young colt,—so much so that I had to take him in hand; whilst his sister, Hargreaves tells me, is one of the best hands he has."

“ Maria St. Crost is as good and amiable as she is attentive,” said Mr. Wynn ; “ her kind disposition and virtuous behaviour gain her universal respect. I cannot help being partial to her, though I eschew favouritism. She approaches my, till now, quite theoretical idea of what female conduct ought universally to be. If the rich were not too proud to look down upon one in so humble a station of life, she might serve as an example to many of them, as well as to her poorer neighbours.”

Mr. Morland was a little surprised at the warmth of his friend's language. His manner, too, appeared more excited than he thought the subject warranted. Attributing it, however, to the pleasure the good man felt upon having found one, who had not altogether rejected his counsel, he made no remark, and Mr. Wynn continued:—

“ As to the youth, I fancy exuberance of spirits, rather than a malicious dis-

position, renders it more difficult to keep him within the bounds observed by other factory children, who may be said to pay a mechanical obedience to their overlookers."

"You may give it what name you please, my dear sir,—manliness, or anything you choose, but it is far too independent for a cotton mill. We had almost broken him in, but the two hours additional play appear to have had a bad effect upon him."

"That circumstance will do much towards proving my observations as to his probable temperament," rejoined Mr. Wynn. "If you take a skylark and confine him to a cage in a close room, he will soon droop and become a spiritless, songless bird; going through the routine of hopping from his perch to his seed-can, and from his seed-can to his perch again, as though it were an exertion too great for him, though a few short weeks before he was looking down from his airy flight amongst the clouds, upon the woods and

fields below: but hang the bird in his native element two hours each day, and you will soon hear him carolling his wonted merry notes, and manifesting an impatient desire to be free once more."

Mr. Wynn perceived the subject was one displeasing to his guest, and therefore turned the conversation into another channel, relating an incident that had occurred to him a few days before.

"I had been called into a neighbouring district," said he, "in consequence of the clergyman being unwell, it was to attend a sick man. The place at which he lived was called Mooter-row; and consisted of four or five stone cottages, that stood a long way detached from any other houses. I inquired of a woman who stood at the door of the first one, if one William Taylor lived there? No, she had never heard of anyone of that name living about there. "But," said she, "if yole ax at th' dur fur up, they'll maybe happly tell yo theer." A young man opened the door of the second house. I put the same

question to him that I did to the woman, and with no better success; for after scratching his head some time, he at last confessed his ignorance upon the subject. "But if yole care yo dane a minnit up ote settle," said he, "I'll see if my faather knows him, for it's likken anough he does." He disappeared, descending through a hole in one corner of the floor, and from which projected the top of a rude ladder. I followed him, and found a man, grey headed, and apparently old, seated before his loom reading, as I afterwards perceived, the 'Northern Star.' Being a little deaf it was some time before he became aware of my presence. This gave me time to look about, for I always take an interest in strange men and places. The cellar was cold and damp, without a flag on the floor; whilst many of the squares in the small window-frame were stuffed with rags, designed, for lack of glass, to keep out the wind. The man was little more than fifty years of age, though he looked much older. He had

an apron on, but no coat, and wore over his arms the legs of a pair of old stockings."

"That is the dress universally adopted by the handloom weavers," remarked Mr. Morland. "You must frequently have observed it, as they stood at the cottage doors, or in groups on the causeway, discussing the welfare of the nation. For poor as they are, they are better informed upon the leading political topics of the day, than, perhaps, any other class of the inhabitants."

"I have often noticed what you mention as to their peculiar habits," continued Mr. Wynn, "but not having many in my district, and they not church people, I had never come much into contact with them. If my new friend was a fair sample of the rest, they are an intelligent body of men. I was very much pleased with him; for having become quite a proficient in the Lancashire dialect, I can enter with interest into their conversation."

"It appears to flow as naturally from you, Mr. Wynn, as Latin or Greek would, and must have cost you as much application to learn."

"Almost, sir. When he knew my errand, he said, 'Ho hi, Billy lives at th' fust hase here.' I told him of my having inquired there already. 'But did yo ax for Billy Thunge,' said he, 'for that's t' name as he gooas by.' And so it proved; the name acted as a talisman upon the woman I first spoke to."

"It is a very remarkable trait in the manners of the people here," remarked Mr. Morland, "that so many of them have adopted, or had imposed upon them false names; whilst the real ones, being gradually disused, are in time forgotten altogether: these names frequently originate in some trifling incident, as in the case of Taylor; who, if he outlive his neighbour, the handloom weaver, will, it is very probable, have William, or rather Billy Thunge, cut upon his gravestone."

"I have a curiosity, Mr. Morland, to

know how he acquired so strange a name?"

"Which I can gratify, sir, for I well remember both the time and cause of his obtaining it. It was during the war, and when a schoolboy, that I and several others one day obtained permission to be present at a review of the local light-horse volunteers, who were to exercise on a moor about two miles from the town. The day was extremely hot, but that did not prevent us from being early on the ground. The few solitary horsemen that had already arrived, were busied rubbing the dust from off themselves and their beasts, when our attention was attracted by the approach of an immense concourse of people, in the midst of which we perceived a number of carts filled with the aspirants for martial fame, an arrangement having been made between the officers and privates, that those men who could not, or dared not, ride their horses to the field, should be taken there in carts: this was a novel scene. Among

those who were afraid to trust themselves on horseback, unless they had a soft sod to fall upon in case of accidents, was this Taylor. Being then a young man, and anxious to signalize himself in his country's cause, he had enrolled his name as one of her defenders. His mother was excessively proud of her son's warrior-like appearance; and resolved to be present upon his first essay in arms, in order that she might witness his being created a captain at least, before the day was over. When the carts arrived on the ground a cup of beer was served out to each man preparatory to mounting. A long time was then spent in an ineffective attempt to form line. Abandoning this as a thing impracticable, the word of command was given to 'fire.' When the smoke cleared off, at least one half of the troop were seen safely deposited on the green sward, our friend being one of them. Dame Taylor returned home and related to a circle of attentive gossips all she had seen, dwelling more

particularly on the wonderful exploits of her son. 'A an if heed begun a bit sanner,' said she, 'heed ha bin at th' yed ot calvary just na; for when 't guns ant blunderbushes started a goin off, they nobbut went rip rap, rip rap, till they geet t'are Billy, an then his went thunge.' But here comes Mr. Kenworthy, he wants to see me about Mr. Marsh's business. What a sad thing it is for his family; his daughters are much to be pitied."

Mr. Kenworthy, one of the leading solicitors of that part of the country, was a little more than sixty years of age, about the middle height and of slender build. His intelligent countenance was ennobled by a high forehead, and, though his eyes were small, still the expression of his face was rendered pleasing by a slight smile that occasionally played upon it. His professional career had been one of a truly honourable nature; so much so that his worst enemies—for no man is without—could not accuse him of ever having won a cause by what is denominated "sharp

practice," having always declined to conduct a suit in which the only hope of success lay in having recourse to such means, advising his clients upon these occasions to settle their dispute privately. By adhering to this line of conduct through life, he acquired a fame which placed him at the head of his profession in the neighbourhood. He was for many years the legal adviser of Mr. Morland's grandfather, he having been one of the patrons of his early days.

With Mr. Kenworthy's presence the conversation of course turned upon legal matters, which would be uninteresting to our readers.

